
An Empirical Assessment of User-Generated Content Variables as Predictors of Consumer Buying Behaviour

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Abstract:

In this paper, the researcher investigates the degree to which the variables of user generation content can be used as predictors of consumer purchasing behaviour within modern online contexts. As the importance of online reviews and social media interactions has increased, it has become more crucial to understand how the content created by users influences buying behavior. The research follows a quantitative methodology by a cross-sectional explanatory research design. The data were gathered using a structured questionnaire that was administered to 225 respondents who are exposed to the user-generated content on online platforms. Predictor variables were perceived credibility of user generated content, informativeness of user generated content, and user engagement with such content whereas the outcome variable was consumer buying behaviour. Multiple linear regression was used to evaluate predictive relationships between the variables. The results reveal that all three user generated content dimensions are significant predictors of consumer buying behaviour with user engagement showing the best predictors, then credibility, and informativeness. The findings underscore the key role of interactive and credible user generated content in the formation of consumer buying intentions and provide useful information to organisations that want to improve their digital marketing strategies.

Keywords: User-generated content, Consumer buying behaviour, Online reviews, Social media engagement, Purchase intention.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The sudden growth of online platforms has altered how consumers seek information and make buying decisions. Online reviews, online rating, comments, discussions on social media, and other forms of user generated content have emerged as a significant source of information that affects consumer behaviour and perceptions. User generated content is also considered more legitimate and more credible, unlike firm generated communication; it is based on peer experiences and opinions. Consequently, consumers have become highly dependent on such content to judge products and services especially in online shopping.

Although its role is increasingly relevant, the impact of user generated content on consumer buying behaviour is not homogenous and can be determined by certain content attributes. Perceived credibility is the level of trust that the consumer places in the information presented whereas informativeness is the usefulness of the content as well as its relevance. Moreover, consumer interaction with the content like reading, interacting with, or attending reviews could enhance the effects of user generated information on buying behavior. Researchers and practitioners working in digital markets need to understand how the combination of these dimensions affects consumer behaviour.

The current body of empirical literature has noted the significance of user generated content in influencing consumer choices but there is still a gap in the literature that would simultaneously test various content dimensions in a predictive model. In new digital consumption settings, especially, there is an absence of evidence concerning the relative contribution of credibility, informativeness, and engagement in predicting consumer buying behaviour. This gap is significant in the process of creating a more holistic view of consumer processing and reaction to peer generated information.

It is against this backdrop that the current study attempts to analyse how much user generated content variables can predict consumer buying behaviour. Through a quantitative method and multiple linear regression analysis, the research offers empirical findings on the predictive power of the perceived credibility, informativeness, and user engagement. Its findings help to understand consumer decision-making in a digital environment better and provide insights that can be used by organisations that want to better take advantage of user-generated content.

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Schröder et al., 2025) This comprehensive literature review synthesises findings from over 300 studies to develop an integrative framework that explains how user generated content (UGC) influences customer decision-making across the consumer journey. Using a structured analysis of research on different UGC characteristics, the authors show that dimensions such as content quality, interaction features, and reviewer attributes shape consumer engagement and subsequent purchase decisions, particularly at the prepurchase stage. The study highlights that while extensive research exists on UGC's prepurchase effects, there remain underexplored areas in purchase and postpurchase behaviour, signalling the need for nuanced empirical enquiry into specific UGC predictors of consumer behaviour.

(Du thi Chung, 2025) This empirical study applied the consumption value theory to examine how perceived value derived from user generated content influences attitudes and adoption of UGC, and in turn, consumers' purchase behaviour. Through survey data collected from 445 social media users in Vietnam, the research identified functional, social, and emotional value dimensions as formative components of overall UGC value. The findings demonstrate that perceived UGC value significantly shapes attitudes toward content and UGC adoption, which then positively relate to purchase outcomes, underscoring the indirect pathways through which UGC characteristics affect consumer decisions.

(Al-Abdallah & Wright, 2025) Employing a descriptive quantitative design, this study compared the effects of user generated content (UGC) and firm generated content (FGC) on consumer buying behaviour in the telecommunications sector. Using data from over 1,200 online respondents in Saudi Arabia, the results showed that UGC dimensions such as content valence and informational richness have significant positive effects on consumer buying processes. However, the influence of FGC was comparatively stronger, suggesting that while peer-created content matters, organisational content strategies still play a substantial role in shaping consumer decisions, particularly in competitive digital markets.

(Chung et al., 2024) This research from an emerging markets perspective investigated how user generated content variables including perceived credibility and information quality influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, with brand engagement as a mediating factor. Using structural equation modelling on survey responses from 208 participants, the study revealed that credibility and informative aspects of UGC significantly enhance positive attitudes toward content, which in turn strengthen purchase intentions. The findings emphasise the layered and mediated mechanisms by which specific UGC qualities impact consumer behavioural outcomes in digital commerce contexts.

(Harmeling & Taylor Perko, 2023) Through a meta-analytic review of 128 effect sizes covering two decades of research on online user generated content, this study developed a theory of consumer digital trust that explains how perceived credibility influences reliance on UGC for purchase decisions. Evidence suggests that consumer trust in UGC is strengthened when platforms minimise misrepresentation risks and enhance content authenticity, illustrating why credible peer-generated information often carries more persuasive weight than traditional marketing messages. The theoretical model foregrounds trust as a critical antecedent to consumers' utilisation of UGC in decision making.

(Geng & Chen, 2021) Investigating the role of interaction quality in UGC, this study collected empirical data from 272 social media users to analyse how interaction quality affects consumers' online purchase intentions via perceived usefulness and trust. Results demonstrated that high interaction quality within UGC enhances perceptions of usefulness and trust, which in turn increase purchase intention. The study further found that product involvement moderates these relationships, highlighting the contextual conditions under which UGC engagement processes exert influence on consumer outcomes.

(Gan & Wang, 2022) Focusing on content characteristics that make user generated content more helpful for consumers, this research examined the systematic impacts of argument quality and source reliability on UGC helpfulness in social media contexts. The findings showed that consumers use helpfulness cues to reduce uncertainty and confusion in purchase decisions, with more reliable and high-quality content facilitating improved understanding of products. This work contributes to the literature by specifying how informational and credibility-related features of UGC affect its practical value for consumer choice.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To examine the extent to which user-generated content variables significantly predict consumer buying behaviour.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional explanatory research design to examine the predictive relationship between user-generated content variables and consumer buying behaviour. This design was considered appropriate as it enables the systematic examination of relationships among variables at a single point in time and supports the objective of assessing the extent to which variations in user-generated content dimensions explain changes in consumer buying behaviour.

1.4.2 Research Approach

A quantitative research approach was employed in this study. The approach was suitable given the nature of the variables and the objective of testing a predictive relationship using statistical techniques. Quantitative analysis allowed for numerical measurement of user generated content constructs and consumer buying behaviour, as well as the application of multiple linear regression to evaluate hypothesised relationships.

1.4.3 Population and Sample

The target population comprised consumers who are exposed to user generated content in online platforms such as social media and review sites. A structured questionnaire survey was used to collect data from a sample of 225 respondents. The sample size was considered adequate for multiple regression analysis, as it satisfies commonly accepted minimum requirements for statistical power and reliability when examining relationships involving multiple predictors.

1.4.4 Sampling Technique

The study employed a convenience sampling technique to select respondents for data collection. This technique was considered appropriate due to its practicality and efficiency in accessing individuals who

are readily available and exposed to user generated content on online platforms. Convenience sampling enabled timely data collection from relevant participants while ensuring that respondents possessed the experiential background necessary to provide meaningful insights aligned with the study objectives.

1.4.5 Research Variables

The independent variables in the study were user-generated content dimensions, operationalised as perceived credibility of user-generated content, informativeness of user-generated content, and user engagement with user-generated content. These variables represent key characteristics through which user-generated content may influence consumer responses. The dependent variable was consumer buying behaviour, operationalised as respondents’ self-reported purchasing tendencies and decision-making influenced by user-generated content. The variables were aligned directly with the research objective and hypothesis.

1.4.6 Instrument Development and Measurement

The following was the Likert Statement developed. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 representing strongly disagree to 5 representing strongly agree. Composite mean scores were computed for each construct prior to analysis.

Table 1.1: Likert Statement for Construct Perceived credibility of User-Generated Content

Sno	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	User-generated content I encounter online is generally trustworthy.	32	47	59	52	35
2	I consider user reviews and posts to be credible sources of information.	46	43	59	48	29
3	I believe most users share honest experiences about products/services.	45	46	59	36	39
4	I rely on user-generated content when assessing product quality.	42	51	61	41	30
5	I consider user-generated content reliable when making decisions.	50	38	72	36	29

Responses relating to perceived credibility of user-generated content indicate a generally moderate to positive perception among respondents. A noticeable proportion of participants expressed agreement that online user-generated content is trustworthy and reliable when making purchase-related decisions. However, neutral responses were also prominent across several statements, suggesting that while many consumers acknowledge the credibility of such content, a degree of caution remains when relying entirely on user opinions and reviews.

Table 1.2: Likert Statement for Construct Informativeness of User-Generated Content

Sno	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
6	User-generated content provides useful details about products/services.	38	52	60	40	35
7	Online reviews help me understand product features and performance.	35	47	63	47	33
8	User-generated content answers practical questions I have about products.	36	46	52	53	38

9	User posts and reviews help me compare alternative products/services.	36	51	64	36	38
10	User-generated content gives me information that is relevant to my needs.	28	56	64	42	35

Findings associated with the informativeness of user generated content reveal that respondents largely perceive online reviews and user posts as useful sources of product related information. Statements addressing the ability of user generated content to explain product features, answer practical questions, and support product comparison received relatively higher agreement levels. At the same time, the presence of neutral responses suggests that the perceived usefulness of information may vary depending on content quality and relevance to individual needs.

Table 1.3: Likert Statement for Construct User engagement with User-Generated Content

Sno	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11	I frequently read user reviews or comments before buying.	37	52	76	28	32
12	I pay attention to likes, shares, or comments on product-related posts.	32	41	61	53	38
13	I actively seek out user experiences on social media before purchasing.	33	58	59	35	40
14	I spend time interacting with or exploring user generated content about products.	36	53	70	43	23
15	I follow product-related discussions or review threads online.	30	53	62	48	32

Analysis of user engagement with user generated content shows moderate engagement patterns among respondents. Many participants indicated that they read reviews, observe interactions such as likes and comments, and actively seek user experiences before making purchase decisions. Nonetheless, the distribution of responses reflects varying levels of engagement, indicating that while engagement is present, it is not uniformly intense across all consumers.

Table 1.4: Likert Statement for Construct Consumer buying behaviour

Sno	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
16	I am likely to purchase a product after reading favourable user reviews.	49	37	60	47	32
17	User generated content influences my final purchase decision.	43	44	55	44	39
18	I feel more confident buying when many users report positive experiences.	52	44	56	37	36
19	I intend to buy products that receive strong user support online.	58	38	53	38	38
20	I often choose brands/products that are recommended by other users.	37	48	47	51	42
21	Negative user-generated content can discourage me from purchasing.	44	50	42	49	40

22	I compare user reviews across platforms before making a purchase.	42	32	57	49	45
23	I am willing to try a new product if user feedback appears credible.	45	47	46	59	28
24	User-generated content affects how quickly I decide to buy a product.	58	35	45	40	47
25	Overall, user-generated content plays an important role in my buying behaviour.	44	45	44	42	50

Responses related to consumer buying behaviour demonstrate that user generated content plays an influential role in shaping purchase decisions. Higher levels of agreement were observed for statements relating to confidence in purchasing after reading positive reviews, willingness to consider recommendations from other users, and the discouraging effect of negative content. Neutral and disagreeing responses were also evident, suggesting that although user generated content is influential, it operates alongside other decision making factors.

1.4.7 Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected through a survey method using a self administered questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement based on their experiences with user generated content. The data collection was conducted over a defined period and responses were recorded for subsequent statistical analysis.

1.4.8 Reliability of the Instrument

Table 1.5: Reliability Testing

Construct	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Perceived credibility of UGC	5	0.806
Informativeness of UGC	5	0.766
User engagement with UGC	5	0.712
Consumer buying behaviour	10	0.913

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach’s alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. These values exceed accepted minimum thresholds, indicating satisfactory internal consistency of the instrument.

1.4.9 Statistical Tools and Techniques

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise respondent responses and compute construct level mean scores. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to test the hypothesis and examine the predictive influence of perceived credibility, informativeness, and engagement with user generated content on consumer buying behaviour. The technique was selected due to its suitability for assessing the combined and individual effects of multiple independent variables on a single dependent variable. Hypothesis testing was conducted at a significance level of 0.05, and the overall model fit and individual predictor effects were evaluated in line with the stated research objective and hypothesis.

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

H₀₁: There is no significant predictive relationship between user-generated content variables and consumer buying behaviour.

For the purpose of testing the above-mentioned hypothesis, the construct mean score was calculated, and the regression equation was applied, and the results so revealed were presented below

Table 1.6: Regression Equation Output

Model Summary					
	R²	Adjusted R²	F Statistic	df	Sig_F
225	0.388	0.3797	46.699	3	<.001

Coefficients				
Term	B	Std_Error	t	p_value
Intercept	0.1716	0.2451	0.7	0.485
Credibility_Mean	0.3122	0.0637	4.903	<.001
Informativeness_Mean	0.2914	0.0648	4.495	<.001
Engagement_Mean	0.3408	0.0684	4.98	<.001

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive influence of user-generated content variables, namely credibility, informativeness, and engagement, on consumer buying behaviour. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 225) = 46.699$, $p < .001$, indicating that the set of predictors reliably explained variation in consumer buying behaviour. The model accounted for 38.8% of the variance in consumer buying behaviour ($R^2 = .388$), with an adjusted R^2 of .379, suggesting a substantial explanatory power.

Examination of individual predictors revealed that credibility emerged as a significant positive predictor of consumer buying behaviour ($B = 0.3122$, $SE = 0.0637$, $t = 4.903$, $p < .001$). Informativeness also showed a significant positive effect ($B = 0.2914$, $SE = 0.0648$, $t = 4.495$, $p < .001$). Engagement was found to be the strongest predictor among the variables, demonstrating a significant positive relationship with consumer buying behaviour ($B = 0.3408$, $SE = 0.0684$, $t = 4.98$, $p < .001$). The intercept was not statistically significant ($p = .485$), indicating that meaningful prediction arises primarily from the explanatory variables included in the model.

Since the overall model and all predictor variables were statistically significant at $p < .001$, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected.

1.6 FINDING

The findings confirm that user generated content variables significantly predict consumer buying behaviour. Higher levels of perceived credibility, informativeness, and engagement in user generated content are associated with increased consumer buying behaviour, with engagement exerting the strongest predictive influence. This highlights the critical role of user generated content characteristics in shaping consumer purchase decisions.

1.7 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that user generated content variables significantly predict consumer buying behaviour. Perceived credibility, informativeness, and user engagement with user generated content collectively explain a substantial proportion of variation in consumer buying behaviour. Among these dimensions, engagement demonstrates the strongest predictive influence, highlighting the importance of

consumer interaction with online content. The rejection of the null hypothesis confirms the relevance of user-generated content as a key factor in contemporary consumer decision-making processes.

1.8 SUGGESTIONS BASED ON FINDINGS

The following are the suggestions based on findings

1. Organisations should encourage authentic user engagement by facilitating interactive review and feedback platforms.
2. Businesses should focus on enhancing the credibility of user-generated content by monitoring misleading or false reviews.
3. Online platforms may prioritise the visibility of detailed and informative user reviews.
4. Marketers should design strategies that promote active consumer participation in content creation and sharing.
5. Companies can leverage engagement indicators such as comments and discussions to understand consumer interests.
6. Consumers should be guided to evaluate user generated content critically rather than relying on isolated opinions.
7. Digital platforms may introduce mechanisms to highlight balanced and experience based reviews.
8. Businesses can respond to user generated content to strengthen trust and perceived transparency.
9. Product information pages may integrate verified user reviews to enhance perceived informativeness.
10. Organisations should analyse engagement metrics to refine targeted marketing approaches.
11. Training programs can be developed to educate consumers on identifying credible online content.
12. Firms may encourage satisfied customers to share detailed post purchase experiences.
13. Online retailers could use user engagement insights to improve customer experience design.
14. Content moderation practices should be strengthened to maintain quality and relevance of reviews.
15. Future marketing strategies should align user generated content initiatives with consumer engagement behaviour.

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