

# The Role of User-Generated Content in Influencing Brand Awareness and Purchase Decisions in Kanpur City

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The Role of User-Generated Content in Influencing Brand Awareness and Purchase Decisions in Kanpur City. User Generated Content, encompassing reviews, testimonials, and social media posts created by consumers, has emerged as a pivotal force in shaping contemporary consumer behavior. The research's primary objective is to determine whether customers engage in information-seeking behavior on online platforms during the pre-purchase phase. Additionally, the research aims to ascertain the significant impact of user-generated content on customers' attitudes towards brands and their purchase intentions in the online realm within the context of Kanpur city. The research utilizes a quantitative approach, employing the survey method. Employing a simple convenience sampling technique, 26 well-structured questionnaires were distributed to gather data. This methodological choice aims to systematically assess the role of user-generated content on brand attitudes and purchase intentions in Kanpur city.

**Keywords:** User Generated Content, online platform, pre-purchase, brand attitude, purchase intention.

## 1. Introduction

The advent of internet innovation has ushered in a transformative era, bringing about profound changes in every facet of our lives. This revolution is particularly evident in the realm of daily activities, where traditional practices have given way to a new, digitally-driven lifestyle. In the past, many tasks, especially those related to making purchases, required physical engagement. In today's dynamic environment, consumer behavior has undergone a transformative shift,

facilitated by the omnipresence of mobile internet connectivity. This paradigmatic change enables individuals to effortlessly partake in consumption and purchasing endeavors anytime, anywhere, as long as they maintain an internet connection. The pervasive nature of mobile internet, as highlighted by Muslim, Rezaei, and Abolghasemi (2014), has effectively dismantled traditional constraints of time and location, fostering a seamless and unrestrained engagement in the realms of commerce and consumption.

In the dynamic urban environment of Kanpur, characterized by a plethora of choices and rapidly evolving consumer preferences, gaining a nuanced understanding of consumer behavior has become crucial for businesses. The onset of the digital era has triggered a fundamental change in how people make their buying choices. The rise of online platforms has endowed consumers with unprecedented access to a wealth of information, fundamentally altering the consumer landscape. At the heart of this informational ecosystem lies User Generated Content (UGC), a pivotal element shaping consumer perceptions and preferences.

User-generated content (UGC), often referred to as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), functions similarly to traditional word-of-mouth but is disseminated through digital platforms. In a broad sense, UGC includes any content created by users who are not part of traditional media, and it significantly influences consumer behavior (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Jonas, 2010; Krishnamurthy & Dou, 2010). This content is commonly distributed across major social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. eWOM/UGC refers to "any positive or negative feedback shared by potential, current, or past customers about a product or company, which is accessible to a wide audience and various organizations through the Internet." This definition underscores the pervasive influence of user-generated content in the digital age, emphasizing its reach and impact on a diverse audience through online platforms. Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler (2004)

The objective of this research is to delve into the behavior of consumers in Kanpur city, particularly their engagement in information-seeking activities on online platforms before making purchase decisions. We seek to unravel the intricate relationship between consumers and UGC, exploring how this content influences their attitudes towards brands and ultimately shapes their intentions to make a purchase.

The context of Kanpur adds a unique dimension to this study. As a vibrant urban center with a diverse consumer base, the city presents an intriguing backdrop for understanding the local impact of UGC. The objective of this research is to offer valuable insights to businesses in Kanpur, assisting them in navigating the digital terrain and customizing their strategies to align with the distinct needs and preferences of the local consumer base.

To accomplish our research goals, we employ a quantitative approach, utilizing the survey method. By distributing 60 well-structured questionnaires to a diverse group of consumers in Kanpur, we aim to gather comprehensive data that will enable us to systematically analyze the influence of UGC on brand attitudes and purchase intentions. The choice of a simple convenience sampling technique ensures that our sample is representative of the diverse consumer demographics in the city.

No longer are purchasing decisions solely influenced by traditional advertising; instead, the voices of fellow consumers play a pivotal role. Individuals now rely on the shared experiences,

opinions, and insights of their peers to guide them through the complex maze of product choices.

This research holds significance not only for businesses seeking to understand and leverage UGC but also for academics and policymakers interested in the evolving dynamics of consumer behavior. By shedding light on the impact of UGC in the local context of Kanpur, we aim to contribute valuable knowledge that can inform marketing strategies, enhance consumer satisfaction, and foster a deeper understanding of the digital era's implications on the relationship between consumers and brands.

In the subsequent sections of this paper, we will delve into the methodology employed, present our findings, and engage in a thoughtful discussion on the implications of our research for businesses, academics, and the wider community in Kanpur. Through this journey, we hope to uncover the nuanced ways in which User Generated Content shapes brand attitudes and influences purchase intentions in the vibrant cityscape of Kanpur.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

User-generated content (UGC), encompassing reviews, testimonials, and social media posts created by consumers, has become a significant driving force in shaping contemporary consumer behavior. This research paper delves into the current body of literature examining how User-Generated Content (UGC) influences both brand attitude and purchase intention.

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) define eWOM as "any positive or negative remark shared by potential, current, or past customers regarding a product or company, made accessible to a large audience and organizations through the Internet." Prior studies have explored various forms of electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) communications, including but not limited to discussion forums (Andreassen, 2009; Cheung et al., 2009), UseNet groups (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004), product reviews (Lee and Youn, 2009; Sen and Lerman, 2007; Tirunillai and Tellis, 2012), blogs (Dhar and Chang, 2009; Kozinets et al., 2010; Thorson and Rodgers, 2006), and social networking sites (SNS).

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) unfolds within a more intricate computer-mediated framework, contrasting with the face-to-face dynamics of traditional WOM. Traditional word-of-mouth relies on physical proximity and a rich array of social and contextual cues, often occurring in private conversations. In contrast, eWOM enables participants to engage in discussions within online communities, creating a more public discourse (Kozinets et al., 2010). Earlier research has concentrated on understanding 'why customers engage in online conversations' (i.e., sender antecedents). Various studies have highlighted several factors that drive consumers to engage in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). These include self-enhancement (Angelis et al., 2011; Fiske, 2002), innovation and opinion leadership (Sun et al., 2006), ability and self-efficacy (Gruen et al., 2006), individuation (Ho and Dempsey, 2010), and neuroticism (Picazo-vela et al., 2010).

In the 2015 research report, Bughin examines the influence of online platforms on purchasing decisions among 20,000 European consumers, spanning 30 product categories and over 100 companies, during 2013 and 2014. The investigation revealed that there was a greater influence than previously thought, with customers being directly affected by 66% of the product

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categories and indirectly by the remaining third. Research indicates that different product categories have varying web-based influencers, each with a limited reach. Initial purchasers in these sectors had approximately a 50% chance of being swayed by online factors, with a 40% probability of the disconnected influence directly affecting their buying choices. The research revealed that a select group of influential individuals generated a substantial number of ideas in each category, gaining notable recognition, especially in specific product segments like footwear and apparel.

(Alyssa Anderson, 2023) in her research paper, the Impact of User-Generated Content on Consumer Purchase Intention. This research examines how user-generated material influences customer purchasing decisions. Primary and secondary research are conducted to have a comprehensive grasp of UGC's impact on modern customers. The final output is a website that provides an in-depth analysis of creator culture and how it has altered in recent years. The research studied the influence of user-generated content (UGC) on consumers and provided director companies with guidance on how to align with their brand identity and incorporate it into their marketing strategy.

Chu and Lu (2007), in their paper "Factors Influencing Online Music Purchase Intention in Taiwan: An Empirical Study Based on the Value-Intention Framework," define purchase intention as the consumer's inclination to make future purchases. In the context of this study, it pertains to the likelihood of individuals making future purchases after exposure to User-Generated Content (UGC) advertising. Tan (2002) noted that purchasing decisions are shaped by factors like perceived moral strength, outcomes, duration of use, social risk, and perceived economic value (Ndlela & Chuchu, 2016). Various researchers have also identified different factors influencing purchase intention. Temesi, Bacsó, Grunert, and Lakner (2019) emphasized the significant role of consumer attitudes in driving purchase intention, while Martins, Costa, Oliveira, Gonçalves, and Branco (2019) highlighted the importance of the advertising value provided by an online platform as a key factor in determining purchase intention.

In the current research, the primary objectives are two-fold. Firstly, the study aims to ascertain the extent to which customers engage in information-seeking behavior on online platforms during the pre-purchase phase. This objective underscores the importance of understanding how consumers actively seek information before making online purchase decisions, emphasizing the evolving dynamics of the digital information landscape. The second objective of this research is to assess the notable influence of user-generated content on customer attitudes toward brands and their purchase decisions in the online space, with a particular emphasis on the distinct context of Kanpur city. By addressing these objectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between consumer information-seeking behavior and the influence of user-generated content on brand perceptions and purchasing decisions within the localized setting of Kanpur city.

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decisions, emphasizing the evolving dynamics of the digital information landscape. Secondly, the study aims to explore the significant influence of user-generated content on customers' brand perceptions and purchase intentions in the online environment, with a particular emphasis on the distinct setting of Kanpur city. This research aims to provide a deep understanding of how consumers' information-seeking behavior intersects with the influence of user-generated content, ultimately shaping brand perceptions and driving purchasing decisions. By focusing on the unique environment of Kanpur city, the study paints a vivid picture of how these digital interactions ripple through the local marketplace, guiding consumer choices and brand loyalty.

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

1. To investigate whether customers engage in information-seeking behavior on online platforms during the pre-purchase phase in Kanpur city.
2. To evaluate the substantial influence of user-generated content on customers' brand attitudes in the online space, focusing specifically on the unique context of Kanpur city.
3. To examine the influence of user-generated content on customers' purchase intentions when making online decisions in Kanpur city.

### **4. AIM**

The overarching aim of this study is to comprehensively understand how user-generated content, including reviews, testimonials, and social media posts, shapes contemporary consumer behavior in the online marketplace of Kanpur city. The study seeks to contribute valuable insights into the dynamics of information-seeking behavior and its implications for brand attitudes and purchase intentions.

### **5. HYPOTHESIS**

H1- Customers in Kanpur city actively engage in information-seeking behavior on online platforms during the pre-purchase phase.

H2- User-generated content significantly influences customers' attitudes towards brands in the online realm within Kanpur city.

H3: There is a substantial impact of user-generated content on customers' purchase intentions when making online decisions in Kanpur city.

### **6. METHODOLOGY**

The study aimed to evaluate the impact of user-generated content on brand attitudes and purchase intentions among customers in Kanpur city. It relied on primary data, gathered directly from customers in Kanpur who were familiar with user-generated content. A straightforward convenience sampling method was employed, distributing 26 well-structured

questionnaires to 100 individuals. All distributed questionnaires were duly completed and returned, rendering the collected responses valid and utilized for the conclusive findings of the study.

## 7. DISCUSSION

A survey incorporating multiple-choice questions was disseminated to individuals aged between 18 and 55. Additionally, optional free-response sections were included to allow participants the flexibility to elaborate on their responses. The survey encompassed a range of topics related to user-generated content, probing into aspects such as the frequency of online purchases, consumer engagement with user-generated content, the impact of positive or negative reviews on purchase decisions, the regularity of checking user-generated content during the pre-purchase phase, and other relevant factors. The survey encompassed 100 participants, distributed across different age categories as follows: fifty respondents falling within the 18-24 age bracket, twenty participants in the 25-34 age range, twenty-one individuals aged 35-44, five respondents aged 45-54, and four participants aged 55 and above.

TABLE 1: Demographic profile

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
• Male	• 43	• 43%
• Female	• 57	• 57%
• Non-Binary	• 0	• 0
Occupation		
• Student	• 3	• 3%
• Employed	• 35	• 35%
• Self-employed	• 54	• 54%
• Unemployed	• 8	• 8%
Monthly Income		
• Below ₹20,000	• 15	• 15%
• ₹20,000-₹40,000	• 52	• 52%
• ₹40,000-₹60,000	• 28	• 28%
• Above ₹60,000	• 5	• 5%

Table 1 exhibits the demographic profile of customer's perceptions about the User Generated Contents in Kanpur City. The survey consists of 57% females and 43% males with 54% self-employed customers, 35% employed, 8% unemployed, 3% students.

Hypothesis 1 (H1):

Customers in Kanpur city actively engage in information-seeking behavior on online platforms during the pre-purchase phase.

The survey analysis states:

- Figure 1: 48% respondents living in Kanpur City read online reviews given by users before making a purchase decisions whereas only 2% respondents rarely read online reviews before making a purchase decision.

7. How often do you read online reviews before making a purchase decision?  
100 responses

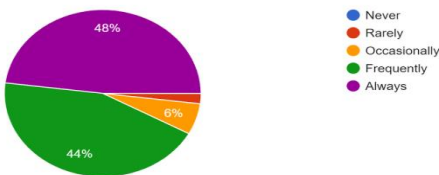


Figure 1

- Figure 2: 100% respondents seek information about products/services online for making a purchase.

16. Do you actively seek information about products/services online before making a purchase?  
100 responses

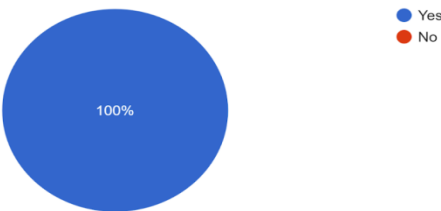


Figure 2

- Figure 3: 47% respondents believe that availability of detailed information about a product or service during your pre-purchase phase is very important, whereas only 1% respondent says that detailed information about a product is slightly important.

17. How important is the availability of detailed information about a product or service during your pre-purchase phase?  
100 responses

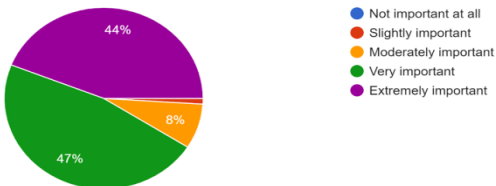


Figure 3

- Figure 4: All 100% respondents have abandoned a purchase due to insufficient information during the pre-purchase phase.

18. Have you ever abandoned a purchase due to insufficient information during the pre-purchase phase?  
100 responses

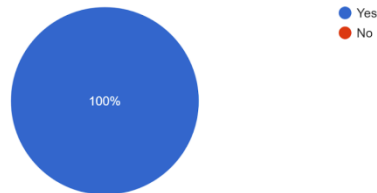


Figure 4

- Figure 5: 93% respondents use Instagram for information-seeking before making a purchase, 85% respondents use Youtube while 76% use Facebook.

23. Which social media platforms do you primarily use for information-seeking before making a purchase ?  
100 responses

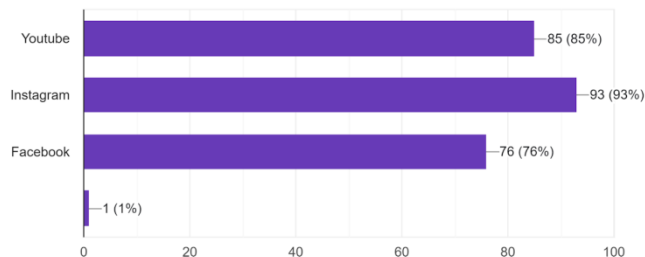


Figure 5

- Figure 6: All 100 respondents have responded what types of information they usually look for during the pre-purchase phase on online platform. All 100 respondents look for product reviews, 95% respondents look for product specifications, 95% look for price comparisons, 93% look for customer testimonials, 90% respondents look for delivery and shipping information, 88% look for return and refund policies, 89% respondents look for brand reputation, and 85% respondents look for social media presence and engagement.



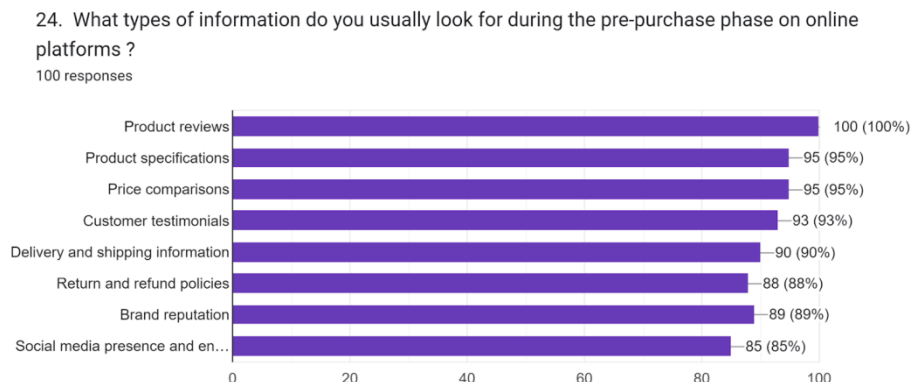


Figure 6

- Figure 7: 48% respondents believe that availability of detailed product information on online platforms impact their confidence in making online purchase.

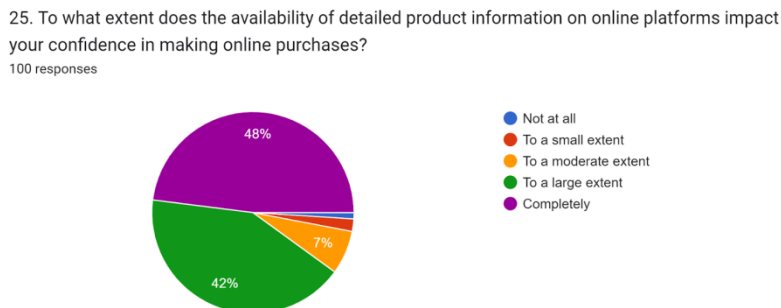


Figure 7

The above figure proves Hypothesis 1 that Customers in Kanpur city actively engage in information-seeking behavior on online platforms during the pre-purchase phase.

Hypothesis 2 (H2):

User-generated content significantly influences customers' attitudes towards brands in the online realm within Kanpur city.

- Figure 8: 48% respondents feels that user-generated content (reviews, testimonials, social media posts like videos) is influential in shaping your attitude towards a brand whereas only 4% respondents feels that user-generated content (reviews, testimonials, social media posts like videos) is influential in shaping your attitude towards a brand.

9. In your opinion, how influential are user-generated content (reviews, testimonials, social media posts like videos) in shaping your attitude towards a brand?  
100 responses

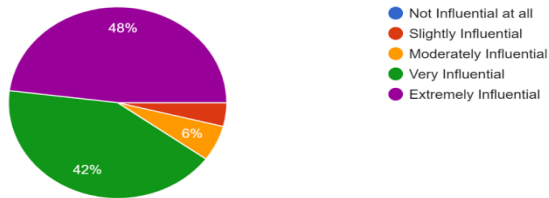
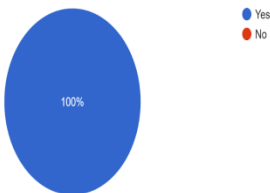


Figure 8

- Figure 9: All 100% respondents changed their purchase intention based on positive user-generated content about a product or brand, whereas 99% respondents have refrained from purchasing a product due to negative user-generated content about the brand.

10. Have you ever changed your purchase intention based on positive user-generated content about a product or brand?  
100 responses



11. Have you ever refrained from purchasing a product due to negative user-generated content about the brand?  
100 responses



Figure 9

- Figure 10: 48% respondents made purchase decisions after engaging with user generated content while 41% frequently made purchase decisions after engaging with user generated content and only 9% occasionally made purchase decision after engaging with user generated content.

14. How frequently have you made purchase decisions after engaging with User Generated Content?  
100 responses



Figure 10

- Figure 11: 91% respondents are more likely to trust information provided by other customers, while 8% respondents are likely to trust information provided by both customers as well as brand during pre-purchase phase.

19. Would you be more likely to trust information provided by other customers or by the brand itself during the pre-purchase phase?  
100 responses

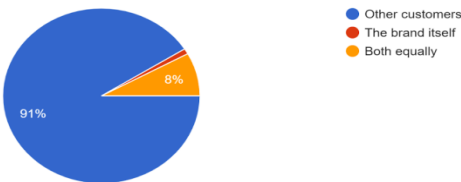


Figure 11

The above figures shows user-generated content significantly influences customers' attitudes towards brands in the online realm within Kanpur city, which proves the second hypothesis of the research.

Hypothesis 3 (H3):

Hypothesis 3 (H3) posited that there is a significant influence of user-generated content on customers' purchase intentions in Kanpur city. The findings strongly support this hypothesis, as evidenced by the survey results. A staggering 100% of respondents acknowledged abandoning a purchase due to insufficient information during the pre-purchase phase. Furthermore, the impact of positive user-generated content on decision-making was evident, with all respondents indicating a shift in their purchase intentions when exposed to favorable content about a product or brand. Conversely, the detrimental effect of negative user-generated content was notable, as 99% respondents refrained from purchasing a product after encountering unfavorable content about the brand. These outcomes highlight the crucial role that user-generated content plays in shaping consumers' decisions in the online marketplace, emphasizing its significance in influencing purchase behaviors in Kanpur city.

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research delved into the profound influence of User Generated Content (UGC) on brand attitudes and purchase intentions within the unique context of Kanpur city. As consumers increasingly turn to online platforms for information during the pre-purchase phase, the significance of UGC, including reviews and social media posts, becomes evident. The findings of this study affirm the pivotal role of user-generated content, revealing that customers actively seek information online before making purchase decisions.

The impact on brand attitudes is substantial, with consumers showing a discernible shift based on the nature of the content encountered. Positive UGC was found to positively influence brand attitudes, while negative content had a deterrent effect on purchase intentions. This dual effect underscores the nuanced role of user-generated content in shaping consumer

perceptions.

Furthermore, the quantitative approach employed through a well-structured survey and convenient sampling method strengthened the reliability of the results. The high percentage of respondents altering their purchase intentions in response to user-generated content reinforces the hypothesis that UGC significantly influences online consumer behavior in Kanpur city.

In essence, this research contributes valuable insights for businesses and marketers seeking to understand and leverage the impact of user-generated content in shaping brand attitudes and driving purchase intentions in the dynamic digital landscape of Kanpur city.

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