

**THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS PERCEPTION
OF THE INFLUENCE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON ADVERTISING**

BY

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MATRICULATION NUMBER:

ART2201244

**DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
FACULTY OF ARTS,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
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AUGUST, 2025

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
COMMUNICATION, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN
CITY, EDO STATE, NIGERIA.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENTS OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A HONS) DEGREE IN MASS
COMMUNICATION**

AUGUST, 2025

DECLARATION

This project is based on a study undertaken by me Amenaghamwon Queensly JOEL in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts under the supervision of Professor Ezekiel S. Asemah.

All ideas and results of this study, were based off my personal research, where the views of others were used; they were duly acknowledged.

AMENAGHAMWON QUEENSLY JOEL

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work “THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS PERCEPTION OF THE INFLUENCE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON ADVERTISING” was written and submitted by AMENAGHAMWON QUEENSLY JOEL Matriculation Number ART2201244, to the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

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STUDENT'S THESIS

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DEDICATION

This project is wholeheartedly dedicated to Jehovah God, the source of my strength, wisdom, and knowledge. His unfailing love carried me through every high and low of this academic journey.

I also dedicate this work to my parent Mr. & Mrs. Joel Bright and Comfort Joel for their love, guidance, unwavering support and financial assistance. And to my Loving Kid Sister Joy Joel, thank you so much for your relentless, encouragement, uplifting comments and emotional support. I couldn't have done this without all of you.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the perception of University of Benin undergraduate students on the influence of user-generated content (UGC) in advertising. With the rapid growth of digital technologies and social media platforms, UGC has emerged as a powerful tool for shaping consumer attitudes, building brand credibility, and influencing purchase decisions. Unlike traditional advertising, which is brand-controlled, UGC relies on peer-driven, authentic, and interactive communication, making it more relatable to today's digital-savvy audience. The research adopted a survey design, using a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 402 undergraduate students across selected faculties. Data collected were analysed using frequency tables and percentages. The study was guided by the Source Credibility Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, which explain how credibility and message processing affect consumer persuasion.

Findings revealed that a majority of students perceive UGC as more authentic, trustworthy, and influential compared to traditional advertising. Results also showed that UGC significantly impacts students' purchase decisions, with peer reviews, social media posts, and influencer content being the most persuasive. Additionally, respondents indicated that brands should incorporate more UGC in their advertising strategies to enhance consumer engagement and trust.

The study concludes that UGC plays a crucial role in shaping advertising effectiveness among young consumers. It recommends that advertisers and marketers strategically leverage UGC to improve authenticity, foster stronger consumer-brand relationships, and increase purchase intention.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The rapid evolution of digital technologies has transformed the way consumers interact with advertising and have shift the power from brand to consumers. One of the most notable development made by this digital age is user-generated content (UGC), it is any form of content created by users and shared on digital platforms these content may include videos, text, images, reviews, or testimonials. Unlike traditional advertising which is brand controlled and a one-way communication channel, UGC is peer-driven and interactive it blurs the line between content producers and consumers making it a powerful tool for shaping consumer attitudes and influencing consumer decisions.

User generated content refers to any content created and shared by individuals, rather than brands or companies about their experiences with a brand (AMA). This content can take any form including; Social media posts, reviews, blog articles, videos, podcasts and images but these are not the limits of user-generated content. This tactics have become increasingly prevalent in the digital marketing landscape because it offers a unique sense of authenticity, enhance search engine optimization (SEO) performance, and can significantly boost a brand's online presence. It has become of great help in advertising because in today's market, people put more trust on the opinions of real consumers over traditional advertisement so, user-generated content builds trust and credibility amongst others when consumers share content about a product or service. According to Arens,

Weigold & Arens (2008), “Advertising is a ‘non-personal’ communication of information” this mean that advertising contents are not generated for one individual but to many people, In the light of this definition, user-generated content although they are generated by individuals (in this content, the brand consumers) they reach the eyes of the masses and help build or break the brands reputation and image. “The historical development of advertising is as old as man.” (Asemah 2010, p.11) In view of that statement, the forms of advertising have advanced as the year advances making user-generated content the most recent form of advertising.

Egbulefu & Nwaoboli (2023) said, “to advertise and sell products, services to a specific target audience, advertising uses a range of media platforms”, in the case of user-generated content, the platform used here are the various social media platforms. In today’s media environment, especially among young digital natives, UGC have emerged as a credible and influential advertising format. Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other social media platforms have allowed users to become creators and promoters of brand related content which has led to the shift in advertising dynamics where consumers often trust peer recommendations and reviews more than brand advertising. The consumers believe that the opinion or review of their peer and help them decide on the choice to take in purchasing a product or trusting a brand. With the introduction of web2.0, internet user have become the target of information dissemination, advertising based on user-generated content has gained popularity (YAWEN SUN 2023). Considering that many individuals frequent social media platforms like; TikTok, Instagram, X, YouTube, Pinterest and others, content generated in those platforms are said to have reached over a billion views more than traditional broadcasters. These social media platforms are now the mediums used for user-generated

content and they help boost authenticity, save resources, improve engagement and organically expand a brand's reach.

According to Asemah (2010,p.11), “ the historical development of advertising is an old man.” He explains that Nigerians have always depended on advertising with its earliest records dating back to the days where town criers, gongs, signals and many others were used to alert the community dwellers about an impending event. Seeing that UGC is peer-driven and interactive, it is an effective promotional tool but it's imperative to understand the principle of advertising makes UGC a vital strategy in the advertising sector.

The importance of user-generated content has grown over time due to its benefits to brands looking to boost their digital marketing effort and engage customers, user-generated content gives room for consumers to share their experiences and this helps brands reach new audiences. User-generated content plays a crucial role in increasing community building and engagement because it encourages customers to share their experiences which creates a sense of belonging and advocacy. These interactions with customers foster a strong relationship between brand and its audience ultimately increasing loyalty. User-generated content is also a strategy of micro influencer advertising, where individuals with smaller but highly engaged audiences promote products through organic content which creates genuine connections with consumers as they relate easily to everyday users than celebrities or micro-influencers.

The undergraduate student population at the University of Benin are tech-savvy, always with their mobile devices, and highly active on social media. Their perceptions, behaviours and reliance in digital content play a critical role in the effectiveness of advertising campaigns, understanding how these students perceive and respond to UGC compared to traditional advertising can offer valuable insights to advertisers.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite the increasing relevance of user-generated content in advertising, there remains a paucity of research focusing specifically on how students in Nigeria University perceive UGC compared to traditional advertising. Most studies focuses on western audiences or general consumers leaving a gap in understanding how localised groups (such as undergraduate in a Nigeria content) interact with and trust advertising content.

With over 77,000 students, university of Benin presents a unique opportunity to study the relationship between UGC and advertising effectiveness. This research aims to examine how University of Benin Undergraduate students perceive UGC's impact on advertising. Are they influenced more by content generated by peers than by traditional advertising messages? Do they view UGC as more authentic and trustworthy? These questions are crucial for understanding the modern consumer behaviour in a rapidly digitizing society.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study were to;

1. Assess the impact of user-generated content on advertising.
2. Determine the extent to which university of Benin Undergraduate students trust UGC over traditional advertising.
3. Analyse the influence of UGC on students' purchase decision.
4. Explore key factors contributing to the perceived authenticity and credibility of UGC.
5. Provide recommendations for marketers and advertisers targeting this demographics.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims to ascertain answers to the following research questions;

1. What is the impact of user-generated content in advertising?
2. How do the undergraduates' students at the University of Benin perceive the credibility and authenticity of UGC?
3. What role does UGC play in influencing their purchasing decisions?
4. Which aspects of UGC (e.g., visual quality, peer influence, relatable) are most significant to them?
5. How does UGC compare with traditional advertising in terms of effectiveness among these students?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to both academic literature and practical marketing strategies. Academically, it expands research on digital media influence in an underrepresented geographical context. Practically, it offers insights that can guide advertising strategies and campaign development tailored to young consumers in Nigeria.

This study would raise awareness in students and consumers of how content influences their decision making processes. This research would examine the university of Benin undergraduate's population thoughts on the effectiveness of user-generated content to advertising.

With the aim of helping brands choose a better mode of advertising, it seeks to provide businesses and marketers with insight into how well university of Benin undergraduate students visit the various channels that promote user-generated content.

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In this study, University of Benin undergraduates in Benin city, Edo state Nigeria are asked to provide their thoughts on the influence of user-generated content on advertising and how versatile they are with user-generated content. Nevertheless, the undergraduates of the University of Benin are the main focus of this research and findings may not be generalizable to all Nigerian students since they all are exposed differently to user-generated content and as such, they have different perceptions of user-generated content to advertising.

Data collection is dependent on the honesty and understanding of respondents.

This research is qualitative and deeper insights into motivations or emotions behind student perceptions may not be fully explored.

1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Advertising: A form of communication that inform the public about a product, service, brand or event.

Buying/ purchasing behaviour: The decision processes and acts of people involved in buying and using products.

Influence: The ability to have an effect on the character development or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself.

Perception: How one's brain organises or view certain information or how one understand and make sense of something.

Student: An individual studying at an educational centre or at a university.

Traditional Advertising: Advertisements produced and distributed by brands through conventional media (TV, Print, Radio, Billboards).

Trustworthiness: The degree to which students believe a piece of content is reliable and authentic.

Undergraduate: A student pursuing a bachelor's degree or other undergraduate degree at a University.

University of Benin: A public research university located in Benin City, Edo state Nigeria.

User-generated content: A content created by individuals about their experiences with a brand, also called (UGC).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter will review scholarly literature on the topics in focus and an examination of the notion of advertising, its development over time, and the effect of user generated content on advertising. It provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for the research, highlighting gaps the study intend to address.

2.1 HISTORICAL REVIEW

2.1.1 EVOLUTION OF ADVERTISING IN DIGITAL AGE

Advertising is one of the most powerful communication tools that almost every company uses in order to promote its products or services (ASA, 2008). Advertising is a paid form of non-personal communication from an identified sponsor, intended to inform, persuade, or remind an audience about products, services, or ideas (*Kotler & Armstrong, 2018*). Advertising is a paid form of communication used by brand owners to persuade the audience (readers, listeners, viewers or specific demographics) in regards to ideas, products or services. The message that is being communicated to the audience is called advertisement and basically, any type of business can be advertised. (*Puranik (2015)* as sited in Asemah, Nkwam-Uwaoma, & Amah (2023) said that the form of advertisement differs from business to business. That is, the way in which you choose to advertise your products depends on the type of business you operate.

Asemah (2011a) defines advertising as a means to reach prospective customers, and influence their awareness, attitudes and buying behaviour. Advertising influences consumer attitude. Advertising has relied on traditional mass media (Television, radio, print, Billboards) to reach

wide audiences, however digital era has transform advertising formats, platforms, and audience engagement. Advertising has being the driving force behind any business because it connects the brand with potential customers but, the 21st century has caused a shift in advertising from the traditional methods like radio, television, print, billboards to digital platforms. Asemah, Nkwam-Uwaoma,& Amah (2023) described advertising as the act or practice of calling the attention of the publics to one's product, services and needs, especially by paid announcements in newspapers and magazine, over radio or television and on billboards to get more customers. Thus, advertising is a paid communication centralised on an organisation and its products that is transmitted to a target audience through a mass medium to promote the brand's image or product. Advertising is a small word, but it is a whole world itself, Asemah, Nkwam-Uwaoma,& Amah (2023) emphasis on the number of brand in the world each battling for a space in the minds of consumers. According to Asemah (2011a), advertising is a communication intended to sell or promote a product, service or concept. Kenechukwu, Asemah & Edegoh (2013) defines advertising as any form of compensation non-personal presentation and promotion of concepts or goods by a clear sponsor.

The evolvement of advertising can be traced back to ancient China where people used bamboo-flute-based oral advertising to sell candy, ancient Egyptians also used papyri to write adverts. This methods continued over the centuries bringing about town criers, signboards, and later medieval newspapers. Print advertising started as a primary method for businesses to reach the mass audience, in 1836, the first paid newspaper advertisement marked a significant shift in the marketing strategy in France. Radio adverts began influencing consumer behaviour in the 1920s and this offer brands a new means of connecting with listeners. *Jake Jorgovan* (2025) says “the radio reached over 60% of U.S. households in 1930” and this massive audience made it a powerful medium for brand messaging. Television

introduced visual content in the 1950s which gave room for advertisers to craft more engaging messages for the viewer's satisfaction, the first TV advert or commercial was aired on July 1, 1941, in the United States. It was an advert for Bulova watches it was a short commercial with the Bulova watch on the map of the United States, this short commercial showed the key importance of adverts. During the early years of advertising, many advertising campaigns be it print, radio or television, have left a lasting image and also promote products. Some of this campaigns are;

- **Print media:** The “Got Milk” 1993 campaign transformed an unbranded product into a memorable brand. It was launched by a California Milk processor Board. Another example is the Apple’s “Sorry, no beige” showcasing the new iMac’s design. The “Think small” Volkswagen campaign which featured a simple design using a beetle’s image to differentiate Volkswagen from larger vehicles and emphasis the beetle’s affordability, efficiency and unique qualities is also a memorable example of some print media adverts that left lasting image on the readers.
- **Radio:** Radios adverts make use music genres like grunge, hip-hop and electronic music providing platforms for niche advertising (Keaton Robbins a blogger). AT&T “You Will” radio campaign
- **Television:** The “Got Milk” was also advertised in the 19s and it left lasting images on the mind of the viewers.

The coming of the internet in the early 1990s marked a significant shift in advertising, the first clickable banner ad was launched in 1994 on HotWired by AT&T. This introduced online advertising and helped businesses to reach potential customers through digital channels, the emergence of ad-serving technologies in 1996 gave room for more targeted advertising increasing customer engagement. In the long run, the rise of search engines in the late 1990s lead to the development of search engine marketing and search advertising

providing advertisers with the power to connect with their target audience effectively. The digital era transformed traditional marketing methods and has offer opportunities for consumer personalised experiences as a result, building a stronger connection with consumers and adapting to evolving consumers behaviour and preferences. With the rise of social media, mobile advertising and programmatic ads, digital advertising has undergone significant transformation.

Social Media Advertising

Social media platforms has transformed advertising and have offer brands direct means to engage with their targeted audience. The launched of Facebook in (2004) enabled the introduction of targeted audience advertising in 2007 which allows brands to reach their desired audience based on the Facebook user's data. TikTok and Instagram have also expanded opportunities for brands connection with consumers through visual content and influencer marketing or advertising.

Social media advertising is a digital marketing strategy where brands pay to display adverts on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, YouTube, and TikTok to reach their target audience allowing brand to promote or build its image, products, or services to specific demographics. These digital channels enable brands create personalised experience and encourage consumer engagement. The evolvment of consumer behaviours has made social media remain a powerful tool for brand seeking to build strong connection with their audience, the data provided by social media users in these various platforms allows specific consumer selection increasing the effectiveness of these advertising campaigns.

Social media campaigns include;

Mobile Advertising

The increase rate of smartphone users has significantly influenced advertising strategies leading to mobile advertising. In 2023 the rate of smartphone users was estimated to 5.5 billion which is approximately 67.8%, this high adoption has moved brands to prioritize mobile advertising in order to reach large audience, the rise of mobile apps and social media platforms has enlarged the opportunities for brands to connect with audience through targeted ads and relevant content. The *Duolingo's* 2019 April fool's campaign that turned its persistent mascot, duo, into a fictional stalker is a great example of mobile advertising campaign, it exaggerated the app's constant reminders by suggesting that Duo could appear in person, this captivated the audience's attention and mixed humour with brand identity and it boosted users acquisition, participation and revenue showing how humorous and well-timed campaign can yield immense success. Domino's pizza is a brand that demonstrated how reward-based mobile advertising works. Customers could open the Domino's app, upload a picture of pizza and receive points that were later used to get free pizza. Many other mobile advertising campaigns have proven how effective mobile adverts are.

According to GlobalStats data, it shows that mobile market is 62.22% higher than desktop, this gives mobile advertising room to reach much broader and diverse audience compared to other forms of digital advertising. If the target of any brand is the younger audience, then mobile advertising is the best approach to get to them because majority of mobile users are young ones. The provision of personal data by mobile users helps the brand to also reach a precise target audience where age is a priority because mobile phone is a personalised item and can reach audience immediate preference. The convenience of mobile device breaks the long line between the adverts and consumers' actions, it create room for immediate action be it making purchase, downloading app, and many others. This means faster results and better conversion rates than traditional advertising.

Mobile advertising format include;

Banner Ads is a very common type of display found on websites and apps positioned at the top, bottom or the side of a page. They attract viewer attention and encourage clicks.

Interstitial Ads are full screen ads that seek attention by occupying the screen during transactions like app loading screen or when navigating app pages.

Native Ads blends with the content of the platform they appear on, they match the design and style of the surrounding content so as not to cause interruption and create a more natural advert.

Video Ads are short clips that can appear before, during and after multimedia content like YouTube videos or websites and apps.

Rich Media Ads are ads that foster a sense of urgency in the audience and encourage them to take immediate action.

Rewarded Ads are in-app ads that offers users reward in exchange for engaging with the ads.

In-App Ads are any adverts seen while using a mobile app be it the standard banner ads or the interstitials.

Push Notifications are short messages sent directly to the user's mobile devices.

Location-Based Ads uses user's geographical location to deliver relevant content or special offers via push notifications.

QR Code is a quick response cods that users can scan using their smartphone camera in other to have access to specific content, offers or websites.

For a long time, mobile advertising have being used in the advertising but, that didn't end the rapid growth in advertising strategies as advertising is now extended to the hands of the consumers. This is where User-generated content (UGC) comes in place.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.2.1 USER-GENERATED CONTENT; DEFINITIONS, CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) in the article "users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media", describe User-Generated Content (UGC) as a media content publicly available and created by end-users with no formal association with the brand. Joe Tobin a blogger relays that UGC has become a buzzword that every business and marketer should be familiar with, he also said that it is any content created and shared by unpaid contributors; customers, or fans of a brand, product or services. Thus, UGC is any form of content created by consumers rather than brands or advertisers, this content can be images, text, reviews, videos, testimonials and even social media post which can build or otherwise a brands reputation.

According to Marcelo (2021) in a study titled " The so-called UGC, he stated that the term user-generated content can be dated back to the first article in the field of social science and Humanities academic database in 2001; Rhine and Figall (2001) and Crawford (2001) which was on the same journal E-content. Later on, wired magazine published the article "We are the Web" (Felly, 2015) which uses terms like "user-generated ratings" and "user-created channels", following this, the term user-generated content (UGC) has become more known and widely used by users or consumers because times have changed and information are now in the hands of the consumers giving them the power of the final decision (what to see and what not to see).

McKenzie, Burkell, Wong, Whippey, Samuel & McNally (2012) defines UGC in a study titled "user-generated online content" as a content that is voluntarily developed by individuals

or a consortium and distributed through an online platform. User-Generated Content was described as “Conversational Media” by Sonvilla-Weiss (2010), this entails that UGC spark conversation. When Consumer see the review, testimony, or social media post of a fellow consumer there is a non-spoken conversation going on in the mind of the viewer regarding the next decision to be taken.

The rise of digital technologies specifically the rise of web 2.0 and social media has given room for UGC to become of rising value in this digital era because the traditional media though still relevant is not a very effective medium of expanding a brand or product reach because consumers view peer-driven content as trustworthy. Smith et al. (2012) argues that UGC “is what is produced in the moment of being social, as well as the object around which sociality occurs”, as the mode of socialising increases, so does the strategy of advertising. The development of UGC over the years has being as a result of changes in consumer behaviour, technological improvement, and social media.

Shift in Consumers Attitude: Over the years consumers have become more knowledgeable and they are currently placing social responsibility, sustainability and brand transparency as a priority in their decision making process. Consumer’s attitude has shift from relying on the messages relayed by traditional media into believing peer-generated content as they find it more accurate and easily relatable. Due to this shift, companies are currently looking for ways to present its products in a personalised way to the consumer and UGC is a good way to portray that. According to Asemah (2011), as they choose, attend to and hold advertisement posts based on their wishes, beliefs and other considerations, the recipient intentionally manipulates the process of control. This is well noted because the main focus of advertisement is on the consumer’s attitude to the message relayed either they accept or reject the message, this makes the consumer the centre of attention to the brands as such, the shift in their attitude cannot be neglected but appeased.

Technological Development: Technological breakthroughs like social networking, e-commerce and smartphone usage has changed the concept of engagement between brands and consumers expanding the level at which consumers can access information and making it easier for brands to reach its desired audience. The emergence of the social media and smart phones especially have given consumers more access to information killing their reliance on traditional media, UGC has taken advantage of this development given consumers the right to influence the decision of other consumers through their content.

Social Media's Growth: The expansion of social media has given users the right or opportunity to make personal brand related posts about a brand's products or services and this content can be easily viewed by other consumers. This is made possible with the help of social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram including all social media platforms. Some examples of this content may include videos, images, reviews, text or even the ratings on a product online.

The concept of user-generated content has spread beyond imagination, consumers now turn to social media for information on new restaurants, trips to take or vacation ideas, movies to watch, and there are reviews on all online purchases you make on social media ranging from school items, household items, to places. With the click of a button, consumers can share experience, recommendations and information about a product's quality for any products, all of these are possible due to the growth of social media.

Social media platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, X, Facebook and many others enable users to interact with each other through content generation and these platforms are used to share user-generated content, part of the contents range from videos on YouTube and TikTok to posts on X and reviews on Facebook or Instagram, all social media platforms contain user-generated content.

User-generated content has grown rapidly due to the improvement of social media platforms. Wikipedia (2001), LinkedIn (2003), MySpace (2003), Facebook (2004), Yelp (2004), X formerly Twitter (2006), WhatsApp (2009), Instagram (2010), and TikTok (2016). UGC is now everywhere in the Internet from images to videos to comments to blogs and event Unboxing social media challenges.

According to Michael Luca, “there are five types of actors on any user-generated content platforms, first the contributors who provide content. Second, the consumers of the content. Third set of advertiser (people and organization that are trying to reach users), the fourth actors are the bystanders (people or organisation that are essentially the subject of content) and finally the designer who set the rules that shape contributions and interactions on the platforms. They all make the concept user-generated content worth mentioning because they all work hand in hand.

2.2.2 THE ROLES OF UGC IN MODERN ADVERTISING STRATEGIES.

User-generated content builds Social Proof. Real customers sharing their experiences on social media platforms reassures potential consumers that the product is trustworthy and delivers a positive results. A user posts a photo wearing a brand’s shoes with a positive caption acts as a testimonial to the product. Organically UGC shared on social media increases visibility without paid advertising Expands Reach. Every tag, mention, or share introduces the product to new audiences. Content from real users feels more genuine than brand ads and enhances Brand Credibility. It helps eliminate scepticism and influences purchase decisions. UGC drives engagement and Community by encouraging users to share content through contests or hashtags and this generates buzz and interaction around a product. UGC gives room for brands to feature UGC in ads, websites, and email campaigns, giving a

diverse and human touch to promotions. UGC Fosters Two-Way Communication, when brands respond to or showcase UGC, it deepens customer relationships and encourages continued sharing and loyalty.

User-generated content has become a cornerstone for effective advertising. Due to the fast pace in the digital world and the need for innovative ways in brands and consumer connection, UGC offers authenticity and engagement that traditional media lacks. Consumers are more inclined to trust peer delivered messages over brand messages, the interaction fostered by user-generated content makes consumers feel appreciated and valued. User-generated content is creating a community around a brand because it fosters conversation and interaction, if a brand makes use of UGC, it adds value to the consumers and make them feel heard and a part of the brand's journey.

User-Generated content is essential in the digital word of mouth advertising that have a powerful impact on a brand's online presence, making it gain immense significance in this digitalised era due to the shift in consumer and brand engagement. In the past, consumers relied heavily on advertisement made by brands to make informed choices but, today's consumers are sceptical to traditional advertising and are turning to UGC for guidance. UGC is seen as authentic, unbiased and relatable, when potential consumers see real people like themselves sharing experiences with a product or services, it established trust and credibility because they relate to the emotions, opinions, and feedbacks of the consumers making it a valuable resources in their decision making process.

User-generated content plays more than one role in today's advertising strategy, it enhances brand's visibility, engagement, credibility and trust, it also influence consumer decisions, it allows brand build stronger consumer relationships, and this increase the business growth. The main aim of any form of advert, is to get a reaction from the viewers and most of this

reaction leads to consumers purchasing the advertised item. Given that UGC is any content be it text or images posted by individuals or brand users about a brand, it makes it more accessible to consumers or users.

Reviews, testimonials or social media post made by consumers are viewed as authentic compared to branded content and consumers engage in content that are created by real users. The cost of advertising using user-generated content is low compared to traditional advertising and it increase advertising budget while keeping the impact.

UGC serves as a highly social influence to purchasing decisions because, seeing others who have used a product posting about the product, it serve as validation for those interested in buying. Updated UGC like reviews and comments can improve search engine ranking and online visibilities. The social media is the greatest tool used in distributing user-generated content. According to Statista (2022), global digital ad spending surpassed S500 billion and social media is the fastest growing segment, this shift is what enable user-generated content. UGC is cost-effective for brands. Instead of spending substantial budgets on creating polished advertising materials, brands can tap into the content created by their own consumers saving both time and money, reducing costs and fostering a sense of community around the brand.

In conclusion, UGC has make advertising simplified of more fruitful than traditional media. UGC being posted usually on social media platforms has made it more effective due to the number of people using the social media in this digitalised system.

2.3 OPINION REVIEW

2.3.1 CATEGORIES OF UGC/ TYPES OF UGC

The types of user-generated content include;

- 1. UGC Based on Text:** This include reviews and ratings, written feedbacks or star ratings on products, services, or experiences on platforms like Amazon, Yelp, and Google Reviews which can influence brand reputation and are heavily trusted because they are made by real people. An example include review on the Bolt app, or any review made about a product or service. Comments and discussion is also a text base UGC, they are responses or opinions of individuals posted on articles, forums, videos or even social media posts available on YouTube (comment section), News forums, Facebook or even TikTok comment sections. This type of content encourages community interaction and builds engagement around shared interests or content. Another type of text-based UGC is blogs and articles. They are long-form content created by users to express opinions, provide information or tell a story, mostly found in Bloggers personal websites which builds brands, drives traffic, and share niche knowledge.
- 2. Visual Content:** Visual is a powerful UGC type because, they convey information quickly, evoke emotions, and boost engagement. Photos or images taken by users and shared online in platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Yelp, or Pinterest are often repurposed by brands for advertising to enhance its authenticity and serves as digital memory-keeping. Memes and GIFs is also a visual UGC. They are visual media created by users that are humorous or satirical posted on X or any other social media platforms. It is significant because it shapes online culture, offer social commentary and serves as content for entertainment or advertising. Visually organised data or instructions created by users often known as infographics is a key visual UGC because, it helps communicate complex information in an engaging and digestible format and are found on Pinterest, LinkedIn, or personal blogs.

3. Video Content: Video is the most influential form of UGC because, it is capable of telling a story, impacting knowledge, entertaining viewers and a form of live interactions. Recorded videos created by users often called vlogs can be used to create reviews on brands product or services. They can be found on YouTube, Instagram, or Facebook watch. Another form of video UGC is Livestream, this real-time video streamed by users facilitates real-time interactions with audiences and are vital for events or product launches. They are usually found on YouTube live, Instagram live, Facebook Live and any other media platform that can be used to distribute live videos. Short-form videos is a significant video UGC because it is brief, entertaining, informative, highly viral and highly addictive and it is a good thrive for UGC. It is perfect for trends and challenges, they are found on TikTok, Instagram Reels, Snapchat and X. A good example is the Infinix's 'NO POSE JUST SNAP' challenge. Short videos carry leverage branded hashtags and campaigns, Unboxing videos or product demonstration is also a type of video UGC.

2.3.2 FACTORS AFFECTING USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

Various factors influence User-generated content and impact both the quality and the quantity of content created, this factors may include;

Motivation: This involves what motivated users to create. Users often create content to express their identity, opinions, creativity, or emotions. Social media have provided platforms for individuals to show their values. Need for social recognition moves users to create content in the pursuit of likes, comments, followers, and shares. These strong incentives are acts of social validation that reinforces user sense of popularity and relevance. Many users contribute helpful contents like tutorials or review to help others so, Altruism is also what motivated

many to share UGC. Brands or platforms often offer many tangible or intangible rewards examples this incentives drive are contests giveaway or featured content campaigns.

Platforms Design: The designs of platforms can impact how users create content, platforms that are intuitive and simple to operate have more user engagement while platforms that are complex and time consuming have lesser user engagement. The availability of built-in tools like filters, music overlays, editing capability and others in a platform makes it easier for users to produce high quality content. User are moved to share content when they have control over who can view it so, privacy and security control is a key factor.

Social Influence: Peer influence, sense of belonging, and trends and challenges are also factors affecting user-generated content. Users are likely to post if their friends or favourite influencers are also creating such content (**social contagion effect**). Being part of a group can inspire more contents sharing as it makes individuals fill like they belong to a community and this inspire users to post content. Trending topics, hashtags or viral challenges also create opportunities for content creation.

Technological Access: Technology is a factor UGC depends heavily on because it contain the various requirement for a successful UGC like; internet access, available device, and accessible platforms. A fast and reliable internet allows users to upload and interact with content without any hindrance, if the internet connection is poor or not available at all, it discourages content sharing. The type of the device can either improve or disprove content quality so, a good device is required for quality and encouraging content creation in the same way, the type platform accessible also encourages content sharing.

Brand Influence: Brand campaigns and brand reputation is another factor affecting user-generated content. When companies ask users to share their stories, it gives users a reason to

create content. If users trust a platform or brand, they are more likely to associate their identity with it and it is a trust built through transparency, consistency and ethical behaviour.

2.3.3 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

ADVANTAGES

Authenticity and Trust. UGC is perceived as more genuine than brand created content, being from shared experience by real users, it builds credibility and trust with audiences.

Cost-Effective Content Creation. Brands can save on content production costs by leveraging high-quality material created by users so, UGC help save the cost while delivering effective results.

Increased Engagement and Reach UGC encourages interactions and helps spread brand messages through shares and mentions. By giving room for audience participation it builds a loyal and active community around a brand, topic or cause.

SEO and Web Traffic Benefits Frequent UGC (like reviews or forum discussions) can improve search rankings and drive organic traffic. More content means more keywords, links, and engagement, which can boost search engine rankings and overall online visibility.

When potential customers see others using and endorsing a product, it acts as validation and can influence their decision to purchase and is referred to as Social Proof.

UGC promotes creativity and diversity, users often bring fresh, innovative ideas and perspectives that brands may not have considered, increasing content variety and richness. UGC can offer insights into how people feel about a product or service, allowing for quick adjustments or improvements.

Disadvantages

Quality Control. UGC can vary widely in quality, tone, and relevance. Poor-quality content may harm brand image if not monitored properly, negative reviews, inappropriate content, or misinformation can go viral and damage the brand's reputation.

Managing and moderating a large volume of UGC can be time-consuming and may require dedicated resources or AI tools.

Users might upload copyrighted materials or violate privacy, which could expose brands to legal liability if used improperly, using UGC without proper permissions can lead to legal complications.

Inconsistency in Messaging. UGC might not align with the brand's values or messaging, leading to mixed or confusing brand communication. Brands have less control over the narrative when users create the content. This can be risky in sensitive or competitive industries. UGC may not always meet brand standards in tone, quality, or messaging.

Risk of Negative Publicity. Negative reviews or inappropriate content can harm brand image if not managed properly, since UGC is created by different individuals, it may not maintain visual or message consistency.

2.4 EMPIRICAL REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Tuten & Solomon (2021) in a study " Social media Marketing", emphasis that user-generated content plays a crucial role in how modern consumers interact with brands, they said that consumers are not only responsible for content consumption but also content creators, and critics and thy can directly affect a brands narratives. They reinforce the idea that trust in user-generated content is higher than traditional media because the contents come from their peers, young consumers perceive peer content as more authentic and engaging than branded messages. They ascertain that young consumers are the sole focus of advertising in today's

advertising era because advertising content are found in social media platforms and this platforms are easily accessible to young audience, and in most cases older consumers may not fully understand the message or content of contents in social platforms and my require the aid of the young consumers to interpret this content so, the opinion of younger consumers matters. In their work, they recommend several strategies that are used for leveraging user-generated content and they include; Use of campaigns like contest or branded hashtags to encourage users to post content or participate in content creation, brand can also showcase the best UGC on their official channel and this is a form of giving voice to the consumer. Tuten & Solomon also highlighted that it is important to get the consent of the content creator before repurposing consumer-generated content and avoid fake UGC or over-managing the message because it can backfire.

Iyengar & Hahn (2009) conducted a study titled "Red media, blue media: Evidence of ideological selectivity in media use. *Journal of Communication*, 59(1), 19-39". This study showed that individuals tend to consume media that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs and this concept of selective exposure is highly relevant in user-generated content because consumers are more likely to trust or engage with UGC that reflects their personal values, or social identity. As a result of this, audience segmentation and ideological alignment is highly recommended to be considered by brands because people might only share or respond to content that resonate with their view. They said that consumers often seek content that confirms their biases and this is evident in political media and showed in brand or product engagement. When the content comes from an individual that the consumers identifies with, it feels more credible and reinforces brand loyalty, this means that the effectiveness of user-generated content is amplified when tailored to niche or ideological subgroups especially in lifestyle or ethical brands. Their work suggests successful UGC campaigns can improve targeting by using algorithmic personalisation to show users that UGC aligns with their

digital behaviour and believes, need to be context-aware by posting the same UGC across different audience groups or platforms may not be equally effective. Although Iyengar & Hahn did not directly study user-generated content or advertising, their insights into media consumption patterns are foundations for understanding why certain user-generation content performs better with specific audiences, how brands can use consumer psychology to tailor content distribution, the importance of ideological and cultural resonance in both message creation and user engagement.

Nielsen (2021) reported that 92% of consumers trust UGC more than traditional advertising, making it a key driver in buying decisions. Brand made adverts have gone out of date and are viewed as un-authentic by modern day consumers while user-generated content is seen as trust worthy and authentic making UGC are more advance method in building brand identity and maintaining a good brand reputation. This findings directly validate the use of UGC in brand strategies to increase credibility and conversions.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“A theory is a set of assumptions, assertions or accepted facts that aims to provide a credible or rational explanation of cause-and-effect links among a group of observed events,” Asemah, Mohammed, Ekhareafo & Okpanachi (2017) stated on page McQuail defines theories as "sets of ideas of various status and origin that may explain or interpret specific occurrences", it is possible to state that theories form the basis of all research and investigation. As such, one needs to be guided by some guidelines derived from theories prior to starting any investigation.

A theoretical framework provides direction for the gathering, assessment, and forecasting of the phenomenon being studied. Stated differently, a theoretical framework aids in the

explanation of why things are the way they are. Having stated so, the research will be based on the Source Credibility Theory and Elaboration Likelihood Model. A collection of ideas and theories that offer a framework for comprehending a particular occurrence is known as a theoretical framework. It serves as a guide for carrying out research and aids in determining the connections between the variables under investigation.

2.5.1 ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL (ELM)

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo introduced the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion in 1986 (Nwaoboli, 2022b). This persuasive model illustrates how messages can affect people's attitudes and actions. According to the ELM, a message's efficacy may be influenced by the amount of time and drive the intended audience devotes to understanding the material being sent. These are the ELM's main principles:

The theory put forth by the ELM suggests that there exist two paths to persuasion: the centre path and the periphery path. The decision between these two approaches is based on how motivated and willing the target audience is to put in effort to understand the message.

Central Path: The central route to persuasion is one that the target audience is considered to be pursuing when they are willing and able to put up the effort necessary to digest the information being delivered. In this instance, the advertisement works best when it offers compelling, well-supported claims and pertinent details in favour of the brand or product it is promoting

Attitude Change: According to the ELM, attitudes may shift as a result of either peripheral or central processing, although the direction followed may affect how strong and long-lasting these changes are. Compared to attitudes developed by peripheral processing, those created through central processing are typically stronger and more enduring.

Persuasion elements: The ELM highlights a number of elements that might affect a message's ability to persuade, such as the message's ability to align with the needs and values of the target audience, the quality of the arguments, the strength of the peripheral cues, and the authority of the source.

Message Processing: According to the ELM, a number of variables, such as the motivation of the target audience, the type of message, and the context in which it is being presented, can affect how much effort and attention is put into analysing the message.

The ELM states that a number of elements, including as the motivation and aptitude of the target audience and the nature of the product being advertised, might influence the decision between the core and peripheral routes to persuasion.

The effectiveness of the endorsement may therefore depend on how these students interpret the information, making the ELM relevant to the impact of celebrity endorsement on the purchase intention of student consumers. The endorsement has the potential to persuade student consumers who carefully and seriously digest the information, but it may have less of an impact on those who rely on surface-level indications.

2.5.2 SOURCE CREDIBILITY THEORY

Source Credibility Theory

This theory was first put forth by Carl Hovland and Walter Weiss in 1951, and it was further developed in 1953. This theory states that the perceived validity of the source affects how convincing a communication is. The credibility of all kinds of communication has been found to be significantly impacted by the perceived reliability of the communication's sources (Asemah, 2017).

The source credibility theory states that individuals are more likely to believe a source when it presents itself as reliable. The idea is that a communicator's positive attributes can affect a recipient's receptivity to a message. This method bases the concept of source credibility on two factors: knowledge and trustworthiness.

According to Hovland and Weiss, trustworthiness is the degree of confidence a communicator has in his intention to communicate the claim he thinks is most correct. Roozen (2018) defines competence as the degree to which a communicator is trusted as a source of information. This theory holds that an audience's response to a communication is mostly determined by how they perceive and interpret the message's source. According to Asemah (2013), a source is more likely to be trusted if it is more knowledgeable and less likely to be biased.

People are therefore more likely to be convinced or swayed when a source presents itself as reliable. According to Asemah (2012), the goal of persuasion is to find the best strategy for influencing the receiver's attitudes and actions during the communication process so that the recipient can see the message from the perspective of the message's originator.

Three criteria are identified by Anaeto & Anaeto (2010) for source credibility:

- The factor models
- The model of functionality
- The model of constructivism

According to Anaeto & Anaeto, the factor model plays a role in determining how much the recipient believes the sources to be reliable. According to the functional model, credibility is determined by how well a source meets the specific needs of the recipient, while the constructivist model examines the recipient's actions in relation to the source proposal.

The impact of celebrity endorsement on students' purchasing intentions can be better understood by applying the source credibility hypothesis. The theory contends that a communication's persuasiveness is influenced by the reliability of its source. When it comes to celebrity endorsements, the celebrity's perceived dependability and authenticity act as a source of credibility that can affect how customers feel about the product or business being promoted.

Therefore, the source credibility theory contributes to the understanding of why celebrity endorsements can influence consumers' purchase intentions in a positive way. The celebrity's perceived authority as a persuasive and informational source can boost the communication's persuasiveness and raise the possibility that the audience will act.

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter has examined the evolution of advertising, the emergence of user-generated content, and the growing trust consumers place in peer-created media. It also reviewed key theories and empirical studies supporting the idea that UGC may be more persuasive than traditional advertising. The literature suggests that students' perceptions of UGC could influence their attitudes toward products and services, especially in a university setting.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the method of data collection, particularly the design, population, sample size, sampling technique and the method of data analysis. Therefore, all will be explained under the following headings:

- Research Design
- Population of the study
- Sample size
- Sampling technique
- Research instrument
- Validity of the instrument
- Reliability of the instrument
- Method of data collection

3.1 Research Design

The survey design was used for this study. A survey is an empirical study that uses questionnaire to discover descriptive characteristics of a phenomenon (Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo and Okpanachi, 2012). Survey research approach is aimed at developing generalized prepositions about human behaviours from what is observed in a sampled population (Asemah et al, 2012). In addition, the descriptive survey describes the population being studied (Berger, 2000) as cited in Asemah et al (2012). This research method was efficient in sourcing information in evaluating opinion, feeling and attitude of undergraduate students of the University of Benin.

3.2 Population of the Study

In research methodology, the population of study refers to the entire group of individuals or elements that the researcher is interested in studying and drawing conclusions about (Nwaoboli, 2022c). It represents the larger target group to which the research findings are

intended to be generalised (Ovie & Nwaoboli, 2022). The population of this study comprises of all undergraduate students of the University of Benin, both from Ugbowo and Ekehuan campus which according to the University records amounts to 77,000 as of 2023/2024 https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Benin

3.3 Sample of the Study

Sample size refers to the number of individuals or elements included in a sample, which is a subset of a larger population (Nwaoboli & Asemah, 2023). It is a crucial consideration in research and statistical analysis as it plays a significant role in determining the reliability and generalisability of research findings (Nwaoboli & Asemah, 2021). A representative sample

was drawn using Taro Yamane's Formula: $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$ where n= sample size,

N= population size (77000), e= margin of error (0.05) $n = \frac{77000}{1+77000(0.05)^2} = \frac{77000}{1+193.5} =$

$$\frac{77000}{193.5} 397.9$$

Adjusting for a 99% response rate: $n = \frac{397}{0.99} = 401.9 \cong 402$

Thus, a Sample size for this study is 402.

3.4 Sampling Technique

This study made use of multi stage sampling technique to select the samples. This technique was appropriate for this study because the respondents were chosen in three stages. From the fourteen faculties currently offered by the University of Benin, which include the faculties of agriculture, arts, education, engineering, environmental science, law, life science, management science, pharmacy, physical science, social science, college of medicine, college of dentistry, and veterinary medicine.

A random sample of three faculties—the arts, physical science, and education—will be examined in the first stage. In the second stage, 13 departments (Mass communication, Theatre Arts, Fine Arts, Early Childhood education and Education, Fine and applied arts, History, Religious studies, Computer education, Physical education, Health education, Chemistry, Computer science, and Physics) were chosen from the 46 departments (Fine Arts, Fine and Applied Arts, Drama/Dramatic/Performing Arts, Linguistics, Edo Language, English Language and Literature, French Language, History, International Studies and Diplomacy, Linguistics and African Languages, Mass communication, Philosophy, Religious studies, Chemistry, Computer Science, Geology, Mathematics, Physics, Statistics, Adult Education, Agricultural Science and Education, Business Education, Computer Education, Education & Economics, Education & Mathematics, Education & Physics, Education & Religious Studies, Education and Biology, Education and Chemistry, Education and French, Education and Geography, Education and History, Education and Integrated Science, Education and Political Science, Education and Social Studies, Education Fine & Applied Arts, Educational Management, Environmental Education, Health Education, Home Economics and Education, Human Kinetics, Industrial, Technical Education, Library and Information Science, Physical Education, Technical Education and Early Childhood Education) in the 3 faculties.

Seven departments (Mass communication, Theatre Arts, Fine arts, Fine and Applied arts, Physical education, Computer education, Health education) were further chosen from the 13 departments as the sample for this study. In the third stage, the researcher selected the respondents using simple random sampling technique.

3.5 Research Instrument

The questionnaire is the research tool used in this study (Asemah, Nwaoboli & Beli, 2022; Asemah, Nwaoboli & Nwoko, 2022). A questionnaire is a list of inquiries created with a certain topic in mind. For the purpose of this study, data from respondents is gathered via the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first was created to gather respondents' biographical information, and the second was meant to gather respondents' psychological information, which would help with the study's research questions.

3.6 Validity of Instrument

After being carefully and thoroughly constructed, a copy of the questionnaire was given to the research work's supervisor for critical inspection and scrutiny to ensure that it was clear, relevant to the goal, the questions and language were appropriate, and the instructions given to the respondents were accurate. In order to make the questionnaire acceptable for this study, suggestions and modifications were made to ensure that the majority of the items properly measured the theoretical construct of this investigation. Reliability of Instrument Ensuring uniformity of the research instrument is crucial. The questionnaire was employed as the data collection tool for this study in order to determine the degree to which celebrity endorsement influences the purchase intentions of University of Benin undergraduate students. The instrument was deemed reliable as it aided in addressing the research questions of the study. A feasibility study was conducted on the instrument to assess its dependability and determine whether this research work may be replicated in the future.

3.7 Reliability of Instrument

Ensuring uniformity of the research instrument is crucial. The questionnaire was employed as the data collection tool for this study in order to determine the degree to which celebrity endorsement influences the purchase intentions of University of Benin undergraduate students. The instrument was deemed reliable as it aided in addressing the research questions

of the study. A feasibility study was conducted on the instrument to assess its dependability and determine whether this research work may be replicated in the future.

3.8 Method of data Collection

For the study, the researcher used both primary and secondary sources. Regarding the principal source of information, copies of the questionnaire were distributed both directly and electronically. To the participants. The survey asked pertinent questions about demographics and section on psychograph. Although the data from the secondary source was gathered by studies in general textbooks, pertinent publications from earlier studies, articles, and online notes and a library.

3.9 Method of data Analysis

Frequency tables and straightforward percentages were used in the analysis and presentation of the data gathered and compiled for this study. The data was practically presented using frequency tables to make it clear and easy for everyone to understand. The amount and figure of the respondents' psychological responses were analysed using simple percentage. Additionally, for ease of understanding, the facts in the frequency table and the straightforward percentage were thoroughly explained.

CHAPTER FOUR:

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the data collected from the respondents and analyses it in relation to the research objectives. A total of 402 questionnaires were distributed to undergraduate students of the University of Benin across all levels online and they were properly filled making the sample size a total of 398 after administration which accounts for 99% response rate. Data retrieved from respondents using the questionnaire will be analysed using frequencies, percentage and tables for the presentation of data.

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Distribution of Respondent by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	191	49.5%
Female	207	50.5%
Total	398	100%

Table 1 shows that the study is made up of male and female respondents, however, female respondents participated more in the research work.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Under 18	23	6.1%

18-22	214	56.6%
23-27	115	30.4%
28 and above	26	6.9%
Total	378	100%

Table 2 shows that the study comprises of respondents of various age distribution, it shows that respondent's between 18-27 are more than other respondents.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Faculty

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage
Arts	80	21.2%
Social Science	78	20.6%
Education	60	15.9%
Engineering	70	18.5%
Law	50	13.2%
Management Science	40	10.6%
Total	378	100%

This table indicates the various faculties in the University of Benin that participated in this research work however, the faculty of Arts were more engaged than other faculties with 21.2% respondents from the faculty.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Institutional Level

Level	Frequency	Percentage
100 level	80	21.2%
200 level	80	21.2%

300 level	85	22.5%
400 level	80	21.2%
500 level	53	14%
Total	378	100%

Table 4 shows that the study is made of respondents of various academic level however, 300 level respondents were actively involved in the study amounting to about 22.5% (85) while the lowest is 500 level amounting to 14% (53).

Usage of Social Media and Exposure to UGC

Table 5: Social Media Platform Usage

Platform	Frequency	Percentage
Instagram	95	15%
TikTok	100	30%
Twitter(X)	99	25%
YouTube	75	23%
Facebook	10	2%
WhatsApp	19	5%
Total	398	100%

Table 4 shows the various platforms used by the respondent but, as seen above, the respondents use TikTok more than other platforms.

The content of this table imply that 30% respondent frequent TikTok and as such TikTok is the means in which they come across user-generated contents so, TikTok is popular among the respondents.

Table 6: I Frequently come across product related posts made by other users on social media platforms

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	140	34.9%
Agree	105	25.9%
Undecided	84	22.2%
Disagree	47	11.2%
Strongly Disagree	22	5.8%
Total	398	100%

Table 6 has the conclusion that respondents have come across content created by users that are product related. This conclusion was drawn because the frequency and percentage of respondents who strongly agrees and agrees is higher than the others. The data (60.8%) from the table above reflects that there is a significant level of exposure to product related content created by users on social media platforms.

Table 7: I have bought or considered buying a product because of a user's post or review online.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	101	26.7%
Agree	174	46%
Undecided	49	13%
Disagree	33	8.7%
Strongly Disagree	21	5.6%
Total	398	100%

Table 7 shows that the user-generated content viewed by most respondents has affected their buying decision. This is reflected in the table with 72.7% strongly agreeing and agreeing that users' post influenced their buying or purchase decision.

Table 8. I trust content created by everyday users about products.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	90	23.7%
Agree	176	43.9%
Undecided	64	17%
Disagree	40	10.6%
Strongly Disagree	28	4.8%
Total	398	100%

Table 8 shows respondents' trust for content generated by everyday users and the data shown on this table indicates that very few respondents lack trust in content created by everyday users. This is evident in the table with 67.6% of respondents significantly strongly agreeing and agreeing that they trust content generated by everyday users.

Perception of UGC vs Traditional Advertising.

Table 9. I Trust user-generated content more than traditional advertising

Variables	Frequency	percentage
Strongly Agree	101	24.1%
Agree	155	41%
Undecided	76	20.1%
Disagree	36	8.2%
Strongly Disagree	30	6.6%
Total	398	100%

In table 9, many respondents agrees that their trust for user-generated content is higher than traditional advertising only a few disagrees or are undecided about it. The data (65.1%) from

the table indicating the sum of strongly agree and agree shows that a significant number of respondents trust user-generated content more than traditional advertising.

Table 10. Traditional advertisements often exaggerate product quality

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	90	23.7%
Agree	166	43.9%
Undecided	64	17%
Disagree	40	10.6%
Strongly Agree	90	23.7%
Total	398	100%

This table indicates that majority respondents agrees that traditional adverts often exaggerates products quality. The data (67.6%) from the above table indicates that significant amount of respondents strongly agree and agree that traditional adverts often exaggerates the quality of advertised products.

Table 11. I am more likely to try a product recommended by a peer online than one promoted in a brand advertisement.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	91	24.1%
Agree	155	41%
Undecided	76	20.1%
Disagree	31	8.2%
Strongly Disagree	25	6.6%
Total	398	100%

Table 11 indicates the reason behinds the respondents' choice of purchasing branded products. 65.1% which is the some of the strongly agree and agree from the above table significantly purchase products recommended by a peer online than of brand Advertisement.

Table 12. User reviews help me make better buying decisions.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	97	23.8%
Agree	169	43.9%
Undecided	64	17%
Disagree	40	10.6%
Strongly Disagree	28	4.8%
Total	398	100%

In table 12, the responses indicate that users review have helped many respondents make better buying decisions. This is indicated in the above table where 67.7% respondents significantly strongly agree and agree making good purchase decision with aid from user reviews.

Table 13. I find social media influencers more relatable and believable than celebrities in traditional ads.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	140	34.9%
Agree	105	25.9%
Undecided	84	22.2%
Disagree	47	11.2%

Strongly Disagree	22	5.8%
Total	398	100%

The respondents in this table says that they find social media influencers more relatable and believable than celebrities in traditional advertisement. 34.9% (140) of the respondents strongly agrees with the statement. This conclusion was drawn because the frequency and percentage of respondents who strongly agrees and agrees is higher than the others. The data 60.8% from the above table indicates that significantly find social media influencers more relatable than celebrities in traditional adverts.

Influence of UGC on consumer behaviour

Table 14. User-generated content influences my decisions when it comes to buying or using a product.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	91	24.1%
Agree	155	41%
Undecided	76	20.1%
Disagree	31	8.2%
Strongly Disagree	25	6.6%
Total	398	100%

Table 14 shows the respondents perception on whether their buying decisions or usage of a product are influenced by content generated by everyday users and 41% of respondents agrees, 24.1% strongly agree with the total of 65.1% indicating that user-generated content has influenced their buying decision.

Table 15. I believe brands should include more user-generated content in their marketing strategies.

Variables	Frequency	Response
Strongly Agree	90	23.7%
Agree	166	43.9%
Undecided	64	17%
Disagree	40	10.6%
Strongly Disagree	38	4.8%
Total	398	100%

Many respondents in table 15 says that brands should include more user-generated content in their marketing strategies. This is evident in the above table with 67.6% strongly agreeing and agreeing that brands should include user-generated content more in their market strategy.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The research aimed to answer five (5) research questions related to University of Benin Undergraduate students' perception on the influence of user-generated content in advertising. The discussion is guided by the theoretical frameworks adopted—Source Credibility Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory—as well as relevant literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

4.2.1 What is the impact of user-generated content in advertising?

In response to this question, data presented in table 11, and 15 will be used. In knowing the impact of user-generated content in advertising, some questions were asked in table 11, and 15 of the questionnaire. Table 11 sought to know the rate at which respondents try products advertised by peers and the data presented in table 11 shows that 6.6% of the respondents strongly disagree to trying a product recommended by a peer online than in traditional advertisement, 8.2% Disagree to trying a product recommended by a peer online than in traditional advertisement, 20.1% are undecided about trying a product recommended by a

peer online than in traditional advertisement, 41% agrees to trying a product recommended by a peer online than in traditional advertisement, while 24.1% agrees to trying a product recommended by a peer online than in traditional advertisement. This shows that the ratio of respondents who are prone to trying a product recommended by a peer online are higher than those who are not motivated to make purchase from peer recommendation online.

The data presented table 15 which was aim to sought out respondents suggestion on what brands should do about implementing user-generated content in their marketing strategy shows that 4.8% of the respondents strongly disagrees to brands implementation of user-generated content to their marketing strategy, 10.6% disagrees to brands implementation of user-generated content to their marketing strategy, 17% of the respondents are undecided on brands implementation of user-generated content to their marketing strategy, 43.9% agrees to brands implementation of user-generated content to their marketing strategy, while the remaining 23.7% strongly agree to brands implementation of user-generated content to their marketing strategy. This shows that the number of respondents who agrees to brands adaptation of user-generated content into their marketing or advertising strategy is higher than those who do not disagree. This means that User-generated content is a very effective means of advertising and it has a very high success as majority individuals today are prone to make choices based on a peer related content online.

4.2.2. How do the undergraduates' students at the University of Benin perceive the credibility and authenticity of UGC?

Table 8 and 9 will be used in responding to this question. In trying to find out how the Undergraduates students at the University of Benin perceived the credibility and authenticity of use-generated content, certain question were asked in table 8 and 9 of the questionnaire. Table 8 seeks respondents trust towards content created by everyday users about product and,

4.8% of the University of Benin students strongly disagrees to trusting content created by everyday users about product, 10.6% disagrees to trusting content created by everyday users about product, while 17% of the University of Benin students are undecided about trusting content created by everyday users about product, 43.9% agrees to trusting content created by everyday users about product, and 23.8% strongly agrees to trusting content created by everyday users about product.

Data presented in table 9 reveals that 24.1% of the University of Benin students Strongly agrees to trusting user-generated content more than traditional advertisement, 41% of the students agrees to trusting user-generated content more than traditional advertisement, while 20.1% are undecided about trusting user-generated content more than traditional advertisement, 8.2% disagrees to trusting user-generated content more than traditional advertisement, and 6.6% strongly disagrees to trusting user-generated content more than traditional advertisement. This indicates that the undergraduates' students of the University of Benin trust user-generated content.

4.2.3. What role does UGC play in influencing their purchasing decisions?

In response to this question, table 12 will be used. The data presented in table 12 indicates the respondents take on making purchase due to user-generated content, 4.8% of the respondents strongly disagrees to making good buying decision using user's reviews, 10.6% disagrees to making good buying decision using user's reviews, 17 % of respondents are undecided on making good buying decision using user's reviews, 43.9% agrees to making good buying decision using user's reviews, and 23.8% strongly agrees to making good buying decision using user's reviews. This shows that UGC plays a very important role in influencing the purchasing decision of the University of Benin students.

4.2.4. Which aspects of UGC (e.g., visual quality, peer influence, relatable) are most significant to them?

In response to this question, table 5 will be used as it highlights the various social media platforms where user-generated content can be found and it is a multi-choice question where the respondents choose the one that is most significant to them. The data analysed in the table shows that 15% of the respondents choose Instagram, 25% of the respondents choose Twitter, 30% choose TikTok, 23% choose YouTube, 2% choose Facebook and 5% choose WhatsApp. This data shows that the aspect of UGC that is most significant to them is the visual quality as that is what is shown in TikTok which is of the highest percentage in this table.

4.2.5. How does UGC compare with traditional advertising in terms of effectiveness among these students?

Table 9 and 10 will be used in responding to this question. The data analysed in table 9 shows that 24.1% of the University of Benin students strongly agree to trusting user-generated content compared to traditional advertisement, 41% of the students agree to trusting user-generated content compared to traditional advertisement, while 20.1% are undecided about trusting user-generated content compared to traditional advertisement, 8.2% disagree to trusting user-generated content compared to traditional advertisement, and 6.6% strongly disagree to trusting user-generated content compared to traditional advertisement.

Table 10 shows the respondent view on traditional advertising in comparison to UGC. It shows that 4.8% of respondents strongly disagree that traditional advertising over exaggerates product quality, 10.6% disagree that traditional advertising over exaggerates product quality, 17% of respondents are undecided on the belief that traditional advertising over exaggerates product quality, while 43.9% agree that traditional advertising over

exaggerating product quality, and 23.7% strongly agrees that traditional advertising over exaggerating product quality. This indicates that compared to Traditional advertising in terms of effectiveness among the students, UGC is more effective as many students uses it as a guideline for making purchase and trusting a product.

This results aligns with the findings of Tuten & Solomon (2020), who observed that youths are constantly immersed in peer-generated media content, especially on social platforms. It also confirms that the digital environment has fundamentally shifted the landscape of advertising, allowing users to create and distribute their own narratives about brands.

According to the source credibility theory, this result would suggest that, in contrast to traditional media sources, social media platforms are becoming more reliable information provider and advertising medium because social media users can relate more to the viewers, there may be greater credibility and trust among them. Therefore, compared to traditional advertising, consumers are more inclined to believing UGC than traditional adverts.

This results may also be relevant to the persuasion Elaboration likelihood Model (ELM). Ac To the ELM, an audience's motivation and capacity for information processing determine how effective a persuasive message will be. The centre route and the peripheral route are the two paths to persuasion that the ELM suggests. The core path entails carefully reading the message, weighing the arguments put forth, and coming to a deliberate conclusion. In contrast, the peripheral method entails giving in to external cues like emotional appeals or the reliability of the source. Overall, the table's findings indicate that social media platforms are becoming more crucial for marketers using celebrity endorsements, and

CHAPTER FIVE:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study examined the perception of University of Benin undergraduate students on the influence of user-generated content (UGC) on advertising, it was carried out using survey research method. The survey research method for gathering data for the study uses questionnaire as the research instrument to collect data from the respondents.

It focused on:

1. Understanding the impact of user-generated content on advertising
2. Assessing the level of trust placed in UGC compared to traditional advertising
3. Determining how UGC impacts consumer behaviour and decision-making
4. The aspect of UGC that is most significant to the students
5. Analysing students trust on UGC more than traditional advertisements.

A total of 402 students were sampled using stratified random sampling across all undergraduate levels (100 to 500). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed quantitatively having a 99% success rate, the total questionnaire analysed was 398.

This are the Key findings of this study:

1. Findings show the University of Benin Undergraduates students are highly exposure to UGC, particularly on WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.
2. Findings show that the students have a strong perception that UGC is more trustworthy than traditional advertising.

3. Findings show the significant influence of UGC on students' opinions, trust, and buying decisions.
4. Findings shows that the students relate more to peer related content then to brand related content.
5. Findings also shows that user-generated content play a very important role in advertising as it is the current marketing strategy.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it is clear that user-generated content plays a significant role in shaping the attitudes and decisions of students towards products and brands. The credibility and reliability of peer-generated content have surpassed the influence of traditional advertising among the majority of Undergraduates.

This suggests a shift in how marketing communication should be structured for younger audiences, especially those in tertiary institutions. Brands that fail to leverage UGC risk losing relevance and trust in a media landscape increasingly driven by consumers themselves. In general, University of Benin students purchasing decision is to a high extent influenced by user-generated content underscoring the importance of this marketing strategy.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study makes the following recommendation:

1. For Advertisers and Brands: Brands should encourage customers to create content around their products and share them on social platforms. Instead of traditional celebrities, brands can work with relatable individuals who already have trust within

student communities, Student consumers rely heavily on peer reviews therefore providing platforms for real customer testimonials can boost credibility.

2. For Student Content Creators: As peers rely on your opinions, ensure that your content is honest and responsible, Use your influence wisely by understanding that your posts can affect others' purchasing decisions—positively or negatively.
3. For the University Community: Media literacy programs should be rendered, Educate students on how to discern between genuine user content and sponsored or deceptive content. Support student creativity by Encouraging responsible content creation through workshops and seminars on digital storytelling, branding, and content ethics.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Future research could adopt a mixed-method approach to gain deeper insights into the driving force behind trust in UGC.
2. Studies could also examine the role of culture, gender, or socio-economic background in influencing trust in UGC versus traditional advertising.
3. Researchers may explore longitudinal studies to assess how student perceptions evolve over time with emerging social platforms.

In summary, the findings of this study reflect a broader digital shift in media consumption and advertising influence. In an age where every consumer is also a potential content creator, brands must adapt to a participatory media environment. User-generated content has proven to be not just influential—but essential—in the advertising mix for today's youth.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Mass Communication,
University of Benin,
Benin City, Nigeria March,
2025

Dear Respondent,

My name is Joel Queensly Amenaghamwon, a 400-level student of mass communication at the University of Benin. I am currently conducting a research study titled: “The University of Benin Undergraduate students Perception of the Influence of User-Generated Content on Advertising.”

This questionnaire is strictly for academic purposes. Kindly respond honestly and sincerely. All information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used solely for research.

Thank you for your cooperation.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

2. Age:

- Under 18
- 18–22
- 23–27
- 28 and above

3. Faculty:

- Arts
- Social sciences
- Education
- Engineering

- Law
- Management sciences

4. Academic level:

- 100 level
- 200 level
- 300 level
- 400 level
- 500 level
- Other (please specify): _____

SECTION B: MEDIA USE AND EXPOSURE TO USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

5. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (You may select more than one)

- Instagram
- TikTok
- Twitter (x)
- YouTube
- Facebook
- WhatsApp
- Others (please specify): _____

6. I frequently come across product-related posts made by other users (e.g., reviews, TikTok/Instagram videos, testimonials):

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

7. I have bought or considered buying a product because of a user's post or review online?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. I trust content created by everyday users about products?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

SECTION C: PERCEPTIONS OF UGC VS TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING

Instruction; Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

9. I trust user-generated content more than traditional advertisements.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. Traditional advertisements often exaggerate product quality.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. I'm more likely to try a product recommended by a peer online than one promoted in a brand ad.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. User reviews help me make better buying decisions.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. I find social media influencers more relatable and believable than celebrities in traditional ads.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

SECTION D: INFLUENCE OF UGC ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

14. User-generated content influences my decisions when it comes to buying or using a product.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. I believe brands should include more user-generated content in their marketing strategies.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Any additional comments on how UGC affects your perception of advertising? _____

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