

The Impact of User and Firm Generated Content on Purchase Decision for Beauty Products

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of User Generated Content (UGC) and Firm Generated Content (FGC) on purchase decisions in Indonesia's beauty industry. As digital marketing becomes increasingly content driven, understanding which type of content drives consumer decision is crucial. Addressing the gap in determining which content type has a stronger effect, this study contributes by comparing UGC and FGC in one analysis. A quantitative method was used with a structured questionnaire distributed to 133 social media users in the JABODETABEK area. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26. Results show that both UGC and FGC significantly influence purchase decisions, with FGC showing a stronger impact. The findings suggest marketers should integrate both content types to strengthen digital strategies.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the rapid expansion of social media has significantly transformed the way consumers interact with brands and make purchasing decisions, particularly within the beauty industry. Platforms such as Instagram have shifted from simple social networking tools to dynamic digital marketplaces. In these spaces, users are frequently exposed to diverse types of content that shape their preferences, perceptions, and consumption behavior. Two of the most influential content forms are User Generated Content (UGC), which is created voluntarily by consumers, and Firm Generated Content (FGC), which is strategically developed and published by brands. While both types play critical roles in influencing consumer perception, there remains limited consensus about which has a stronger effect on the decision-making process.

This study seeks to address that gap by examining how UGC and FGC influence consumer purchase decisions in the beauty sector, focusing on active Instagram users in the JABODETABEK region of Indonesia. Social media platforms continue to serve as major sources of product information and social validation, which makes understanding the distinct impact of various content types especially important for marketers. Moreover, digital content plays a vital role in forming consumer trust and purchase intentions, particularly in industries where visual appeal and social influence are dominant, such as cosmetics (Mathur et al., 2021; Marlina, 2022). This research makes a valuable contribution by analyzing UGC and FGC within a single analytical framework, allowing for a direct comparison of their relative influence on consumer behavior.

In addition, the study uses a localized sample that reflects the digital behavior of Indonesian beauty product consumers. Indonesia represents a growing digital market with a high level of social media engagement, making it an ideal context for investigating online purchase behavior (Ardiansah & Maharini, 2021). The main objective is to determine how strongly UGC and FGC influence purchase decisions and to identify which form of content is more persuasive in this particular market setting. To provide real-world relevance, this study focuses on Hanasui, a fast-growing Indonesian beauty brand under PT Eka Jaya Internasional. Established in 2016, Hanasui has built a strong presence on Instagram and TikTok through strategic FGC campaigns, including product photos, tutorial videos, and influencer collaborations. Simultaneously, the brand benefits from extensive UGC, as users regularly share testimonials and product experiences across social platforms. This dual content strategy makes Hanasui an ideal case for analyzing how different types of content shape consumer decision-making. According to a 2024 report by CNBC Indonesia, Hanasui recorded high sales performance and consistent consumer engagement, underscoring its relevance in the evolving beauty market (CNBC Indonesia, 2024). By focusing on a niche yet relevant population and a locally significant brand, this research not only fills a theoretical gap but also provides practical insights for digital marketers aiming to optimize content strategies in emerging economies.

In addition, this research contributes to the literature by explicitly comparing UGC and FGC in one integrated model, something rarely done in previous studies. Most prior research tends to analyze these two content types separately, which limits the understanding of their relative strengths in influencing consumer behavior (Kim & Johnson, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). Therefore, this study introduces a new approach that responds to the current digital marketing landscape where both content types coexist and compete for consumer attention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

User Generated Content (UGC)

User Generated Content refers to any form of media content, such as reviews, testimonials, or social media posts, that is voluntarily created and shared by unpaid individuals, often consumers. UGC is generally perceived as authentic, trustworthy, and relatable because it reflects real user experiences rather than polished brand messages. Several studies have highlighted the credibility of UGC in influencing consumer behavior, suggesting that content from peers tends to be more persuasive than company messages. Research by Gabelaia (2023) found that UGC enhances brand awareness and consumer trust in online purchasing environments, although its impact may depend on product-related factors such as price sensitivity and popularity. Additionally, Aljarah et al. (2022) indicated that UGC has a stronger effect than firm-led content in fostering brand advocacy in online settings, particularly when mediated by customer engagement and brand familiarity.

H1: User Generated Content (UGC) positively influences purchase decision for beauty products.

Firm Generated Content (FGC)

Firm Generated Content includes professionally crafted content that originates directly from brands or companies, such as advertisements, product descriptions, and branded social media campaigns. FGC is designed to maintain consistency in messaging, build brand image, and persuade consumers through strategic communication. Although traditionally viewed as less trustworthy than UGC, recent studies suggest that FGC still plays a major role in informing and guiding consumer decisions, especially when it delivers clear, accurate, and visually appealing information. Findings from previous research, such as by Soekotjo et al. (2025) explored the impact of FGC on fast-moving consumer goods and revealed that branded content significantly enhances brand equity and influences consumers' willingness to purchase. Similarly, Al-Abdallah and Jumaa (2022) reported that in the telecommunications industry, FGC has a more pronounced influence on the purchase decision process compared to UGC, especially when the messaging aligns with brand credibility and consumer expectations.

H2: Firm Generated Content (FGC) positively influences purchase decision for beauty products.

Social Media

Social media platforms function as dynamic digital ecosystems that allow users to interact, create, and distribute content. These platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, serve as primary channels for both User Generated Content (UGC) and Firm Generated Content (FGC). They support real-time engagement between brands and consumers, which contributes significantly to shaping brand perception and influencing consumer behavior. The Social Influence Theory highlights how peer interaction and digital engagement can modify individual attitudes and behavioral intentions (Cheung et al., 2021). Social media enables users to not only consume content but also to participate in two-way communication with brands, thus fostering deeper emotional and informational connections.

Zulkarnain et al. (2024) further emphasize the multifaceted role of social media by identifying its key attributes. These include its ability to function as a broad information-sharing tool, its influence on personal development, its role in motivating educational and professional pursuits, and its contribution to collaborative social interaction. Additionally, social media encourages critical thinking and community participation. Instagram, in particular, stands out due to its visual-centric nature and features such as Stories and Reels, which enhance content virality and user engagement. From a marketing perspective, social media platforms have evolved into strategic marketplaces that allow brands to interact directly with consumers, gather feedback, and personalize content delivery. In the context of this study, social media is not merely a communication tool but the main medium through which UGC and FGC are disseminated and evaluated by consumers. It functions as the primary mechanism that mediates the relationship between digital content and consumer purchase behavior.

Purchase Decision

The consumer's buying decision process includes five key stages: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation (Kotler and Keller, 2021). This sequence illustrates how consumers begin by identifying a need, actively seek information, compare potential options, make the purchase, and later assess the outcome of their decision. Supporting this view, purchase decision is an integrative process in which individuals utilize knowledge to assess multiple behavioral alternatives before ultimately selecting one (Setiawan and Rabuani, 2021). Purchase decision itself refers to a complex process by which individuals evaluate and select a product or service based on a combination of internal motivations and external influences. Purchase decisions encompass a series of mental and behavioral stages in which consumers identify their needs and decide on the most favorable solution (Andrian, 2022).

Another study supports this view by defining the purchase decision process as a problem-solving mechanism employed by consumers to fulfill their needs and desires (Khoiriah et al.,2023). There are some factors such as pricing, accessibility, promotional offers, and service quality that significantly shape the final decision (Riadi,2023). In a similar vein, (Nugroho & Soliha,2024) emphasize the role of product quality, convenience, and customer service in driving purchasing behavior. Thus, purchasing decisions are not solely rational but are affected by both emotional and contextual factors. In this study, four dimensions are used to assess the purchase decision variable: (1) Trust, the consumer's confidence in the product's quality, authenticity, and reputation; (2) Habit, the repetitive purchase behavior based on familiarity or prior positive experiences; (3) Reference, the degree to which external recommendations, such as online reviews or word-of-mouth, influence consumer choices; and (4) Repeat Order, the intention or action of purchasing the product again, indicating satisfaction and brand loyalty.

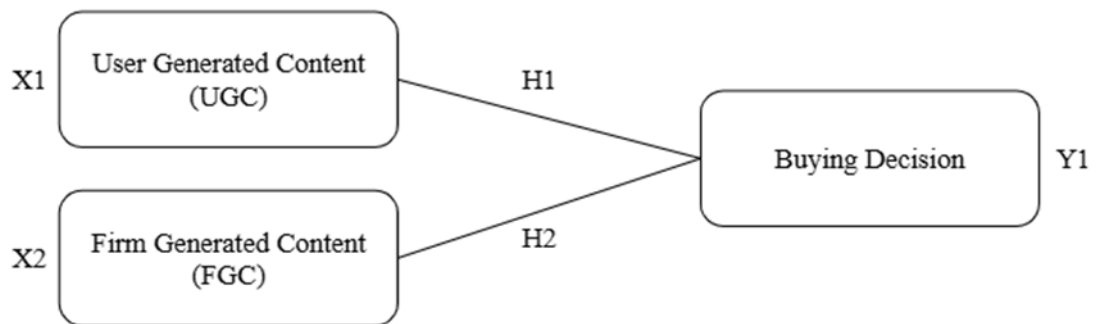


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

This study offers a distinctive contribution by directly comparing User Generated Content (UGC) and Firm Generated Content (FGC) within a single empirical framework focused on a specific local beauty brand, Hanasui, on Instagram. Previous studies have typically examined UGC or FGC separately, or in generalized industries without highlighting a contextually relevant case. Moreover, limited research has explored how these content types influence consumer purchase decisions in emerging markets such as Indonesia, where social media behavior is unique and rapidly evolving. By employing a localized sample of digitally active users and integrating both content types in one model, this study not only fills a theoretical gap in digital marketing literature but also provides practical implications for brands operating in similar socio-digital environments.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study applied a quantitative research methodology with a causal research design to investigate the influence of User Generated Content (UGC) and Firm Generated Content (FGC) on consumer purchase decisions. The causal approach allowed for structured analysis of the relationships between independent and dependent variables using statistical methods. The research was conducted in the context of the beauty industry, focusing on the Hanasui brand, a local Indonesian cosmetics company known for actively utilizing both UGC and FGC on platforms such as Instagram.

Population and Sample

The research targeted active Instagram users in the JABODETABEK area (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi) who have been exposed to both UGC and FGC related to beauty products, particularly Hanasui. Due to the undefined size of the population on social media, the study considered it infinite. A purposive sampling technique was applied, selecting respondents based on predefined relevance criteria such as being an active Instagram user and having previous exposure to beauty-related UGC and FGC content.. Using the Cochran formula with a 95% confidence level and 10% margin of error, the minimum sample size was calculated at 96. To enhance data validity, more than 150 responses were collected via online questionnaires distributed through Google Forms, of which 133 were deemed valid and included in the final analysis.

Data Collection Instrument

Primary data were collected using a structured online questionnaire consisting of closed-ended items measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). This format was chosen to avoid neutral responses and reduce central tendency bias. The questionnaire covered demographic information and scale items adapted from prior validated studies, aligned with dimensions such as credibility, authenticity, brand message, promotional appeal, and repeat purchasing behavior. To supplement the quantitative data and improve instrument validity, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with selected consumers and Hanasui marketing personnel. These interviews followed Esterberg's qualitative method (in Sugiyono, 2023) and aimed to ensure alignment between questionnaire items and consumer perception of UGC and FGC.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were processed and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. The following procedures were conducted:

- a. Validity and Reliability Tests to assess instrument consistency and accuracy.
- b. Classical Assumption Tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, to ensure regression model suitability.
- c. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis to evaluate the effects of UGC and FGC on purchase decisions.

- d. T-tests and F-tests to assess the individual and joint significance of independent variables.
- e. Visual diagnostics, such as scatter plots and Q-Q plots, were used to support statistical assumptions and evaluate distribution symmetry, justifying the application of parametric methods even in the presence of minor deviations from normality.

RESEARCH RESULT

Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 133 valid responses were collected from Instagram users residing in the JABODETABEK area who are familiar with Hanasui and have seen UGC or FGC content. The demographic profile is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' Demographics

Criteria	Category	Frequency
Gender	Male / Female	44 / 89
Age	<18 / 18–24 / 25–30 / >30	10 / 95 / 14 / 14
Income (IDR)	<2M / 2–5M / 5–10M / >10	56 / 42 / 24 / 11
Occupation	Student / Employee / Other	82 / 32 / 19
Domicile	Jakarta / Bogor / Depok / Tangerang / Bekasi	24 / 16 / 13 / 69 / 11

Validity and Reliability Testing

Validity:

All item indicators across UGC, FGC, and Purchase Decision variables show Pearson correlation coefficients above the r-table value (0.1703), indicating validity.

Reliability:

Cronbach's Alpha for each variable exceeds 0.86, confirming internal consistency.

Table 2. Summary of Validity and Reliability

Variable	Validity ($r > 0.1703$)	Reability ($\alpha > 0.60$)
User Generated Content (UGC)	Valid	0.886
Firm Generated Content (FGC)	Valid	0.908
Purchase Decision	Valid	0.914

Normality Testing

Although normality tests (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk) indicated p-values < 0.05 , the scatterplot analysis (Figure 2.) shows residuals are randomly and symmetrically distributed. Thus, the data are suitable for regression.

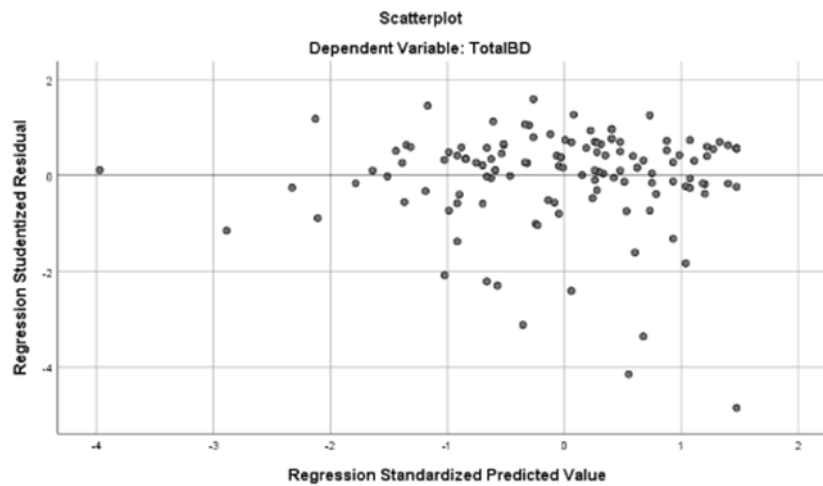


Figure 2. Residual Scatterplot

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The R^2 value indicates how much of the variance in the dependent variable (purchase decision) can be explained by the independent variables (UGC and FGC).

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error
0.685 ^a	0.470	0.462	5.053

Hypothesis Testing Partial Test (*t*-test)

To determine the individual influence of each independent variable, a partial *t*-test was conducted. A variable is considered to have a significant effect if the *t*-count > *t*-table (1.98 at $\alpha = 0.05$) and *p*-value < 0.05.

Table 4. *T*-Test Results

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig.
(Constant)	1.433	3.459	-	.414	0.679
User Generated Content	0.342	.129	.255	2.657	.009
Firm Generated Content	0.597	.121	.474	4.974	.000

As summarized in Table 4., which shows that both UGC and FGC significantly influence purchase decisions. This indicates that both types of content have a positive and statistically significant impact. But keep in mind that in this study FGC demonstrates a higher standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.474) than UGC (Beta = 0.255). This suggests that although UGC contributes meaningfully to consumer behavior, firm originated content has a more substantial influence on the final purchasing decision. The difference in Beta values underscores the greater explanatory power of FGC, likely attributed to its clarity, message consistency, and visual branding elements that reinforce consumer trust and cognitive processing.

These findings support the conclusion that a dual content strategy leveraging the credibility and emotional appeal of UGC alongside the persuasive, structured messaging of FGC can enhance marketing effectiveness. It also validates prior literature suggesting the complementary role of consumer- and firm-generated content within digital ecosystems.

DISCUSSION

Consumer purchase decisions are shaped through a series of cognitive and behavioral stages, beginning with need recognition and progressing through information search, evaluation of alternatives, the actual purchase, and post-purchase evaluation. Within this framework, marketing communication content plays a critical role in guiding and influencing consumer choices at each stage. Prior literature has established that both User-Generated Content (UGC) and Firm-Generated Content (FGC) contribute to shaping consumer attitudes and intentions, albeit in different ways. UGC tends to build emotional connection and authenticity, while FGC offers structured, persuasive, and authoritative messaging that can lead to stronger behavioral outcomes.

This study examined how both UGC and FGC influence consumer purchase decisions in the beauty industry, specifically focusing on the Hanasui brand in the JABODETABEK region. The results of multiple linear regression analysis revealed that both content types significantly affect purchasing behavior. UGC recorded a t-value of 2.657 with a significance level of 0.009, indicating its substantial role in influencing consumer decisions. Content such as customer reviews, peer testimonials, and authentic user experiences was found to contribute to trust formation and emotional resonance. This finding is aligned with previous studies, including Gupta (2022) and Gabelaia (2023), which identified UGC as a driver of initial consumer interest through perceived credibility and social validation.

However, the influence of FGC was found to be more dominant in this study. The FGC variable produced a higher t-value of 4.947 with a significance level of 0.000, suggesting that firm-created content exerts a more consistent and persuasive effect on consumer decision-making. Structured brand messages, professional visuals, and planned campaigns are perceived as more informative and credible, particularly in high-involvement product categories like cosmetics. These findings are consistent with the research of Soekotjo et al. (2025), Zhang et al. (2023), and Whanarahardja and Setiyaningrum (2023), who emphasize the critical role of firm-authored content in guiding consumers toward final purchasing choices.

Further analysis reveals that while UGC is effective in generating early engagement and fostering community, its influence may taper off during the final decision phase, where clarity, reliability, and perceived quality become more crucial. FGC, by contrast, supports consumers in the evaluation and purchase stages by offering coherent brand narratives and detailed product information. The results are also supported by Al-Abdallah and Jumaa (2022), who highlighted the superior impact of FGC on the overall consumer buying process.

In practice, this means that brands such as Hanasui can benefit from employing a dual-content strategy. By combining the relatability and trustworthiness of UGC with the authority and professionalism of FGC, companies can influence both emotional and rational aspects of consumer behavior. This integrative approach aligns with the principles of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which emphasize consistent and complementary use of multiple content forms across consumer touchpoints.

Moreover, the study contributes to the evolving discussion on content asymmetry in digital marketing. It challenges the generalized assumption that UGC is always more persuasive by demonstrating that FGC may exert greater influence when credibility, detail, and decision certainty are prioritized. The context-specific insights gathered from the Indonesian beauty market underscore the need for strategic content alignment based on consumer behavior stages, where UGC supports early interest and brand engagement, while FGC reinforces evaluation and purchase intent.

In conclusion, the findings affirm that both UGC and FGC are essential components of an effective digital marketing strategy. Each content type serves a distinct purpose within the consumer decision-making journey. Rather than positioning them as competing elements, businesses should treat them as complementary tools that, when integrated strategically, can maximize marketing outcomes and enhance consumer trust, engagement, and conversion rates.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study finds that both User Generated Content (UGC) and Firm Generated Content (FGC) significantly influence consumer purchase decisions in the beauty industry. Among the two, FGC emerges as the stronger and more consistent factor, especially in the later stages of the buying process. FGC helps consumers by offering structured, reliable, and detailed product information. It builds trust and shapes brand perception key elements for cosmetics, where buyers often seek assurance before making a purchase.

On the other hand, UGC contributes by increasing emotional engagement and relatability. It plays a valuable role in the early stage of the customer journey by raising awareness and sparking interest through content created by fellow consumers. However, its influence tends to be less direct when it comes to final purchase decisions compared to the persuasive power of professionally crafted FGC.

The results also suggest that an integrated strategy combining both UGC and FGC is more effective than using either alone. In the Indonesian market context, structured brand communication (FGC) resonates better when supported by authentic peer content (UGC). This reflects the core ideas found in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and integrated marketing communication (IMC) theories, which highlight the importance of blending emotional appeal with informative content in digital marketing.

To apply these findings, beauty brands should tailor content strategies based on platform and timing. UGC can be prioritized on formats like Instagram Stories or product reviews during early awareness phases. FGC, on the other hand, should be strengthened during decision-making and promotional periods using product showcases, official campaigns, or influencer collaborations. Evaluation of success should not only rely on engagement metrics, but also on how content drives actual conversion

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Every research project has its own set of limitations, and this study is no exception. One of the main limitations is the focus on a specific region, namely JABODETABEK, which may not fully represent the broader population in Indonesia. Since consumer behavior can vary based on regional, cultural, and economic factors, the findings of this study may not be applicable to audiences outside the sampled area. As a result, the generalizability of the results remains limited.

In addition, the research relied on self-reported data collected through an online questionnaire. While this method offers convenience, it may also introduce certain biases. Respondents might have provided answers based on their assumptions or social desirability rather than reflecting their actual thoughts or behavior. This could reduce the accuracy and reliability of the results. Moreover, since the research design was cross-sectional, the data only captured responses at a single point in time, which restricts the ability to observe changes in consumer behavior over time or to establish causal relationships.

The focus on a single brand, Hanasui, also presents a constraint. Although this provides in-depth insights into a specific case, the findings may not be relevant to other types of beauty brands or industries. Different brands, especially international or premium ones, may involve different patterns of consumer engagement with UGC and FGC. Additionally, the study concentrated only on two main independent variables User-Generated Content and Firm-Generated Content. Other important factors that could affect purchase decisions, such as pricing strategies, product quality, brand loyalty, or influencer credibility, were not considered.

For future research, it would be beneficial to include respondents from different regions and demographic groups across Indonesia or other countries in Southeast Asia. This would improve the diversity and representativeness of the sample. Researchers should also consider adding other relevant variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding of consumer decision-making in the context of digital marketing. Variables like brand trust, message credibility, and customer satisfaction could offer valuable insights.

Finally, adopting a mixed-method approach that includes both quantitative and qualitative methods would help enrich future studies. In-depth interviews or focus groups, for example, could provide deeper understanding and reveal nuanced consumer motivations that are not easily captured through surveys alone. Longitudinal studies that observe changes in behavior over time would also help clarify how consumer attitudes toward UGC and FGC evolve, making

the findings more robust and applicable to real-world digital marketing strategies.

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