THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING INNOVATION ON PURCHASE INTENTION AMONG GEN-Z CONSUMERS

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of user-generated content collaboration (UGCC) as a form of social media marketing innovation on the purchase intention of Gen-Z consumers. A quantitative descriptive approach was used, involving 100 respondents aged 18–25 years who are active users of social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. Data were collected through an online questionnaire and analyzed descriptively to identify general patterns and tendencies in consumer responses. The findings show that Gen-Z respondents perceive collaborative campaigns as more authentic, trustworthy, and engaging compared to traditional advertisements. When brands invite users to co-create or share content, it enhances their sense of connection, credibility, and motivation to make a purchase. The results support Social Proof Theory (Cialdini, 2001), the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), and the Innovation Diffusion Theory (Rogers, 2003), confirming that social influence, positive attitudes, and early adoption shape purchase decisions in digital environments. This study contributes to marketing research by highlighting UGCC as an effective strategy for brands to strengthen engagement and attract younger consumers in the digital era.

Keywords:
user-generated content collaboration, social media marketing innovation, purchase intention, Gen-Z, digital marketing

Introduction

User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC) is a strategy where brand gets people to make and share content about it. Companies now use real and creative ideas from customers to build trust, get people interested, and improve their brand image, instead of just relying on traditional ads. This partnership helps brands and their customers get to know each other better and makes ads feel more real in today's crowded online world.

The group with the most influence and the highest usage of social media is Generation Z (Gen-Z). They are highly engaged, value-driven, and skeptical of traditional advertisements because they were raised in the digital era. Typically, they trust the opinions of their friends and actual customers more than those of brands. Therefore, using user-generated content is a good way to influence their purchasing

decisions because it fits. On social media, Generation Z (Gen-Z) is the most active and significant demographic. They are highly engaged, value-driven, and wary of traditional advertising because they were born into the digital age. Compared to brand-generated messages, they are more likely to believe the opinions of friends and actual user experiences. Therefore, using user-generated content becomes an effective way to influence their purchase decisions, as it aligns with their desire for openness, creativity, and community involvement.

Few studies have explicitly examined the effects of User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC) as a novel and distinctive marketing tactic, despite the fact that numerous studies have examined the influence of social media marketing on consumer behavior. In order to create more successful digital strategies that appeal to this intelligent and connected generation, marketers must have a thorough understanding of how this collaboration affects Gen-Z's purchase intentions.

Customer decision-making in the digital age is greatly influenced by User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC). User-generated content (UGC) consists of user reviews, recommendations, and anecdotes. Gen-Z values honesty and trust, and this kind of content feels authentic and real (El-Shihy & Awaad, 2025). They underlined that UGC is crucial in influencing consumer behavior due to its dependability and authenticity, which especially appeals to Gen-Z. Indirect consumer-brand collaboration in creating narratives and brand identities is also reflected in this type of content.

People usually look to others to determine what is right in a given situation; when many people are acting in a certain way, that behavior is viewed as more acceptable and desirable (Cialdini, 2001). This suggests that when a large number of people produce and distribute brand-related content, this behavior gains social validation and affects other people's purchasing decisions. Therefore, through social proof and interactive digital participation, UGCC not only improves consumer engagement but also fortifies purchasing intentions.

Theoretical Framework

To understand how User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC) influences purchase intention among Gen-Z, this study is built upon several behavioral and marketing theories that explain consumer decision-making in digital contexts.

a. Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), a person's attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control all influence their intention to carry out a behavior. Peer and influencer-generated content in the UGCC setting creates subjective norms that mold Gen-Z's ideas of what is fashionable or socially acceptable. While interactive campaign participation increases perceived control over the purchasing process, positive and genuine user content also promotes positive attitudes toward the brand. According to studies by El-Shihy and Awaad (2025), Gen-Z's purchase intentions are strengthened by user-generated content because it affects their social attitudes and how credible they believe brands to be.

b. Social Proof Theory (Cialdini, 2001)
    According to the social proof theory, people try to learn from the behavior of others. Users view a product as more well-liked, reliable, and worthwhile when they witness friends, influencers, or online communities taking part in a UGCC campaign. This is consistent with research by Saroor and Khan (2025) and Usman and Wijaya (2024), which demonstrates that peer participation and UGCC on social media greatly boost consumer trust and purchase intention.

c. Innovation Diffusion Theory (Rogers, 2003)
    How innovations proliferate within a social system is explained by this theory. By co-creating promotional content rather than passively consuming it, UGCC exemplifies a type of marketing innovation. Early adopters of such innovations are frequently Gen-Z, who are recognized for appreciating creativity and digital engagement. Adoption and purchase behavior are accelerated by these campaigns' perceived novelty and interaction. This theoretical connection was supported by research by Khoirin and Marlena (2021), which demonstrated that interactive user-generated content (UGC) campaigns on TikTok successfully raise users' intention to buy fashion items.

d. Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)
    Two routes of persuasion are explained by this model: the central route, which is motivated by careful consideration of the facts, and the peripheral route, which is motivated by social or emotional cues. UGCC makes use of both: peer and influencer participation stimulate peripheral processing (social belonging, attractiveness), while genuine user experiences stimulate central processing (trust, information value). El-Shihy and Awaad (2025) have demonstrated that in UGCC, social interaction and authenticity combine to produce stronger and longer-lasting purchase intentions.

Conceptual Explanation of Variables

a. User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC)
    The process by which consumers and brands work together to create and distribute promotional content on social media platforms is known as UGCC. It emphasizes authenticity, interaction, and customer empowerment, reflecting innovation in marketing communication. Co-creation campaigns enable users to express their creativity while boosting brand trust and engagement, according to earlier research (Felix et al., 2022; Daugherty et al., 2020).
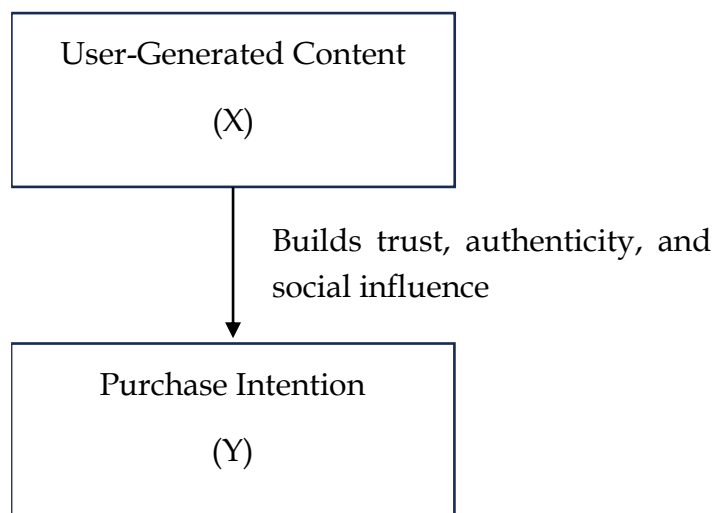
b. Purchase Intention
    A consumer's deliberate plan to purchase a specific good or service in the future is known as their purchase intention (Dodds et al., 2020). It is the last phase of consumer decision-making and is impacted by perceived social influence, attitude, and trust. According to research by Lin, Swarna, and Bruning (2021), purchase intention is greatly increased by authentic and captivating digital content, particularly among Gen-Z.

Relationship Between Variables

UGCC strengthens Gen-Z consumers' trust, engagement, and sense of belonging, which shape positive attitudes toward brands and motivate purchase decisions. When individuals see peers and influencers co-creating content, they perceive the brand as genuine and community-driven, reinforcing their willingness to buy.

Therefore, this study proposes that User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC), as a form of social media marketing innovation, has a positive impact on Purchase Intention among Gen-Z consumers.

Conceptual Framework Diagram

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  User-Generated Content     │
│                             │
│          (X)                │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              │
              │   Builds trust, authenticity, and
              │   social influence
              ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   Purchase Intention        │
│                             │
│          (Y)                │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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Method

Research Design

In order to describe how User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC), a type of social media marketing innovation, affects Purchase Intention among Gen-Z consumers, this study employs a quantitative descriptive design. The method is centered on gathering and analyzing numerical answers to a structured online survey that was disseminated via Google Forms.

In order to give a broad picture of Gen-Z's perceptions, this study summarizes patterns and trends based on respondents' responses rather than running intricate statistical tests.

Population and Sample

The population of this research includes Gen-Z social media users who are active on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. This generation is considered the most relevant group because they are highly engaged with digital marketing and value authenticity in online interactions.
The sample consists of 100 respondents selected through purposive sampling, with the following criteria:

1. Aged between 18–25 years old (Gen-Z group).
2. Active on social media for at least 2 hours per day.
3. Have seen or participated in a brand-related user-generated content campaign (e.g., hashtag challenges, influencer–user collaborations, brand reposts).

Respondents were reached through online distribution, primarily among university students and young adults.

Variables and Operational Definitions

Variable	Type	Definition	Indicators	Scale
User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC)	Independent (X)	The brand's practice of encouraging consumers to co-create, share, or interact with content related to its products or campaigns on social media.	1. Perceived influence over brand image 2. Informative and honest content 3. Peer/influencer participation 4. Popularity and community engagement 5. Authentic and trustworthy content 6. Motivation to contribute	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree – 5 = Strongly Agree)
Purchase Intention	Dependent (Y)	The consumer's tendency or willingness to buy a product after exposure to user-generated collaborative campaigns on social media.	1. Curiosity to know more about the product 2. Considering buying 3. Positive attitude toward the brand 4. Willingness to try 5. Intention to recommend 6. Likelihood to purchase	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree – 5 = Strongly Agree)

Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of three parts:

1. Demographic section, covering age, gender, and social media usage habits.
2. Statements related to UGCC, focusing on how respondents perceive collaboration-based marketing content.
3. Statements related to Purchase Intention, measuring curiosity, willingness to try, and purchase consideration.

All items used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). The link was distributed through social media platforms and messaging groups, and responses were collected anonymously.
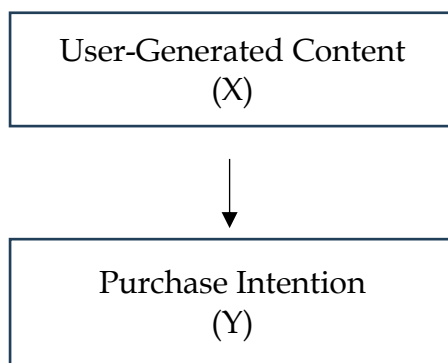
Data Analysis Technique

Since the study focuses on descriptive interpretation, the data were analyzed by:
1. Summarizing frequency and percentage of demographic responses (e.g., platform usage, hours online, gender).
2. Calculating the general trend (mean or mode) of each indicator to identify respondents' overall agreement level.
3. Describing the pattern of answers in narrative form to explain how UGCC influences Gen-Z's purchase intention.

The results were interpreted qualitatively, emphasizing respondents' agreement trends and behavioral patterns rather than statistical testing.

Research Model

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│  User-Generated Content │
│           (X)           │
└─────────────────────────┘
             │
             ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Purchase Intention    │
│           (Y)           │
└─────────────────────────┘
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Research Hypothesis

Based on the literature review and theoretical framework, the following hypothesis is proposed for this study:

H_1: User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC), as a form of social media marketing innovation, positively influences Purchase Intention among Gen-Z consumers.

This hypothesis acts as the conceptual framework for interpreting the patterns found in the questionnaire responses, despite the fact that this study employs a descriptive methodology rather than inferential statistical testing. It is predicated on the idea that Gen-Z consumers' purchase intentions are strengthened when they participate in and engage with user-generated collaborative campaigns.

Results

Table 1. Respondent Data from Questionnaire (n = 100)

| *Variable*	Category	n	%
Age	18-25 years	100	100%
Gender	Male	49	49%
	Female	51	51%
Active on Social Media	Yes	100	100%
Favorite Social Media	Instagram	26	26%
	TikTok	46	46%
	YouTube	17	17%
	Twitter/X	8	8%
	Facebook	3	3%
Daily Social Media Duration	1-2 hours	36	36%
	2-4 hours	42	42%
	4-6 hours	16	16%
	>6 hours	6	6%
Have Seen Brand Campaign	Yes	100	100%

Source: researchers' questionnaire (2025)

The study collected responses from 100 Gen-Z participants, the majority of whom were between the ages of 18 and 25. The distribution of genders was balanced, with 51% of respondents being female and 49% being male.

Instagram (26%) and TikTok (46%) were cited by the majority of respondents as their primary social media platforms, followed by Facebook (3%), YouTube (17%), and Twitter/X (8%). 42% of respondents said they used social media for two to four hours every day, 36% for one to two hours, and 22% for more than four hours.

Every respondent was an active user who had come across brand campaigns that used User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC), including influencer partnerships, hashtag challenges, and reposted user content.

Chart 1. Agreement levels for the most representative UGCC (X) indicators
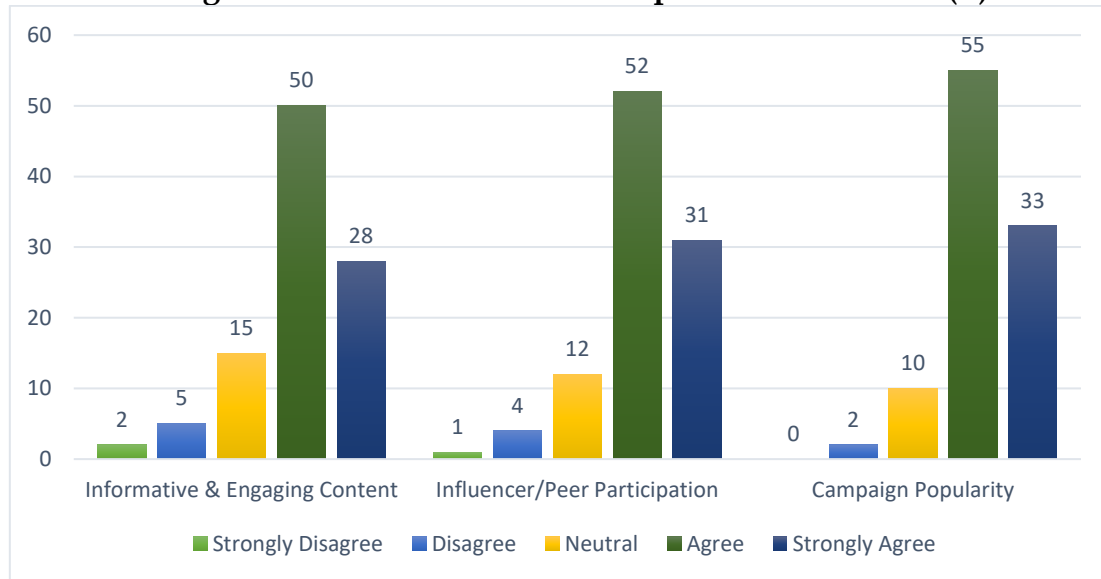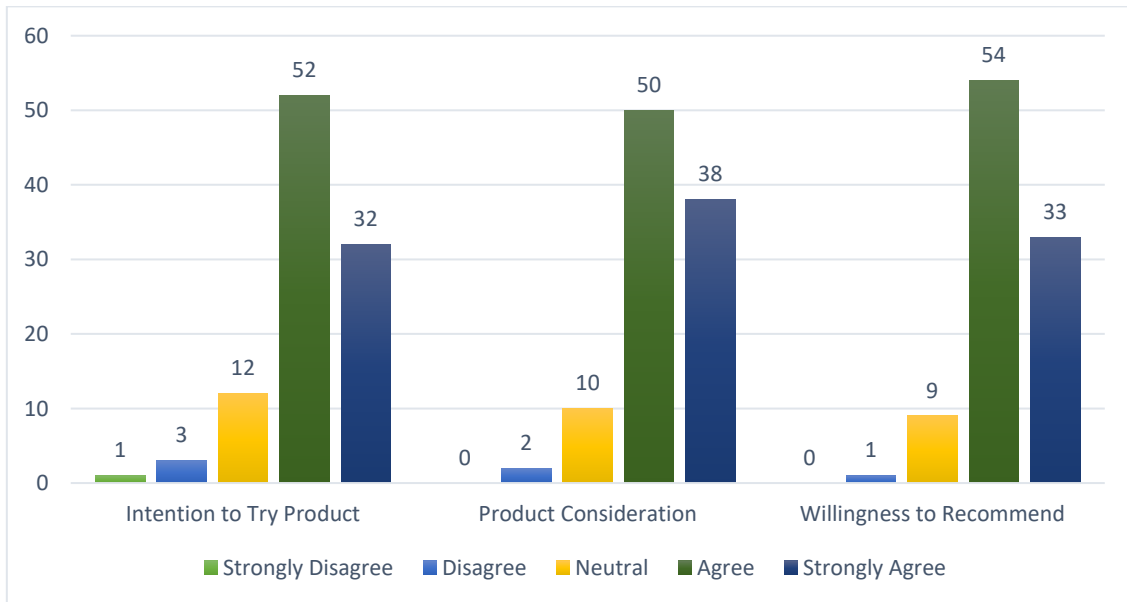

Source: researchers' questionnaire (2025)

Respondents' opinions of UGCC were generally favourable. The majority of participants concurred that brand user-generated campaigns felt genuine, imaginative, and captivating, particularly when well-known creators or influencers were featured. Because it clarifies product understanding and fosters brand trust, most people found informative content to be the most appealing. Additionally, respondents pointed out that campaigns with high user participation—that is, campaigns that a large number of people join or share—create a stronger impression of credibility and popularity.

In addition, respondents believed that honest and relatable content produced by users makes the brand appear more genuine, while the sense of collaboration encourages them to contribute and feel part of a larger online community. This demonstrates how UGCC effectively builds connection, trust, and authenticity—all of which are essential characteristics for Gen-Z when assessing brands on the internet.

Chart 2. Agreement levels for the most representative Purchase Intention (Y) indicators

Source: researchers' questionnaire (2025)

Additionally, there were consistently positive tendencies in the responses pertaining to purchase intention. After viewing a joint campaign, the majority of respondents indicated interest in finding out more information about a product. Many respondents said they would think about buying the product or giving it a try later on, particularly when the campaign seemed original and genuine.

Additionally, many respondents said that after participating in a user-generated content campaign that they found authentic or entertaining, they would suggest the product to others. Given that Gen-Z consumers are more inclined to recommend products they learn about through participatory brand activities, this finding implies that UGCC boosts both individual purchase intention and word-of-mouth potential.

Overall, these results indicate that User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC) strongly supports Purchase Intention, as it builds the credibility and emotional connection that drive Gen-Z consumers toward making purchase-related decisions.

Discussion

According to the study's findings, Gen-Z consumers' purchase intentions are clearly and favorably impacted by User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC). According to the descriptive results, the majority of respondents thought collaborative campaigns were genuine, educational, and interesting, and many of them strongly indicated that they would try or suggest products that were promoted by them. This illustrates how companies can successfully boost trust and emotional connection when they allow users to co-create content, which in turn increases consumers' propensity to buy.

Additionally, the findings show that Gen-Z customers are very engaged on social media and like engaging marketing experiences like influencer partnerships, hashtag challenges, and reposted user content. Their innate desire for involvement, community, and self-expression in digital spaces is reflected in this behavior. In this regard, UGCC gives Gen-Z a purposeful platform to interact creatively with brands, giving them a sense of belonging and value.

These results are in line with a study by El-Shihy and Awaad (2025), which highlighted how user-generated content greatly influences consumer behavior by encouraging authenticity and trust. Specifically, Gen-Z consumers are more likely to rely on peer experiences than on conventional advertising. Their need for real interaction is satisfied by UGCC's cooperative and sincere atmosphere, which also strengthens their sense of community and increases their propensity to buy from companies that actively engage them.

Cialdini's (2001) Social Proof Theory, which explains that people frequently look to others for clues about what is right or popular, is further supported by the findings. Gen-Z perceives brands as reliable, fashionable, and trustworthy when they witness their peers, influencers, or online communities taking part in brand campaigns. Their attitudes and purchasing intentions are strengthened by this social validation, which increases group confidence.

The findings also lend credence to Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior from a behavioral perspective. By producing entertaining, imaginative, and genuine campaign experiences, UGCC has a positive impact on attitudes toward brands. Subjective norms are shaped by peer participation, which makes interacting with or buying from a brand seem socially acceptable. Customers also feel more in control and confident about their choices when they produce or share their own content, which increases their propensity to buy.

The results also support Rogers' (2003) Innovation Diffusion Theory, which describes how people embrace novel concepts or technological advancements. Gen-Z consumers are early adopters of digital trends and are therefore attracted to creative, collaborative, and self-expression-focused marketing formats. By appealing to their passion for digital participation and co-creation, UGCC embodies this new type of marketing innovation. Businesses can boost engagement across social networks and hasten the spread of their messages by letting users directly contribute to brand storytelling.

All things considered, the conversation emphasizes how User-Generated Content Collaboration effectively combines originality and authenticity in contemporary marketing. It turns brand communication into a community-driven, cooperative process rather than a one-way promotion. Since Gen-Z values honesty, originality, and community, UGCC fosters trust, fortifies emotional ties, and raises the possibility that they will make a purchase. These characteristics make UGCC a potent and long-lasting marketing strategy in today's intensely social and participatory digital culture.

Conclusion

According to this study, Gen-Z consumers' purchase intentions are positively and significantly impacted by User-Generated Content Collaboration (UGCC), a type of social media marketing innovation. According to the results, Gen-Z respondents—who are very active on digital platforms like Instagram and TikTok—think that collaborative content is more engaging, genuine, and reliable than traditional advertising. Customers feel more connected to a brand, think it is more trustworthy, and are more inclined to buy from it when brands allow them to co-create or share content.

This study supports a number of well-known behavioral and marketing theories from an academic standpoint. The findings are consistent with Cialdini's (2001) Social Proof Theory, which posits that people's opinions and decisions are impacted by the behavior of others. Additionally, they bolster Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior by showing how UGCC influences favorable attitudes and subjective norms that result in more robust purchase intentions. Additionally, the study highlights how Gen-Z consumers act as early adopters of new, innovative marketing strategies, which is in line with Rogers' (2003) Innovation Diffusion Theory. This study adds to the expanding body of research on consumer behavior and digital marketing by validating these theoretical frameworks, especially when it comes to co-created and participatory content strategies.

Practically speaking, the results highlight the necessity for brands to switch from one-way promotional communication to more cooperative, two-way engagement tactics. Gen-Z audiences strongly identify with the values of authenticity, community, and trust that are fostered by encouraging customers to take part in hashtag challenges, remix campaigns, or influencer partnerships. Through meaningful consumer participation, UGCC strengthens long-term loyalty while increasing brand engagement and purchase intention at a cost-effective and significant rate for marketing practitioners.

This study has a number of limitations in spite of these contributions. There were only 100 Gen-Z participants, which might not be an accurate representation of the general population. Subjective bias is another risk associated with using self-reported survey data. Furthermore, the study excluded users from other generational groups and cultural contexts and only examined Gen-Z users. In order to further explain the strength of the relationship, the study only looked at one independent variable (UGCC) and ignored potential mediators like brand trust, authenticity perception, or engagement intensity.

Future studies should use larger and more varied samples in light of these limitations in order to provide wider generalizability. To create more intricate models of consumer behavior, future research could examine other factors like engagement, emotional connection, and brand trust. Comparisons across platforms, like those between YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, may be useful in determining which settings work best for UGCC campaigns. Lastly, future research could look at how joint campaigns affect real purchase behavior and customer loyalty over the long run.

In conclusion, User-Generated Content Collaboration connects the values of participation, authenticity, and creativity that characterize the contemporary Gen-Z consumer. In the fast-paced world of digital marketing, brands can strengthen their purchase intentions, foster stronger emotional connections, and increase trust by enabling audiences to become co-creators rather than passive viewers.

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