Journal of Social & Organizational Matters

Vol 4 No 3 (2025)251-277

Exploring The Impact of User-Generated Content on Digital Media Production and Consumption in Pakistan

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Keywords: *User-Generated Content (UGC), Digital Media, Media Consumption, Media Production, Credibility, Creativity, Public Opinion, Crisis Communication, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Diffusion of Innovations*

DOI No: https://doi.org/10.56976/jsom.v4i3.289

The research evaluates how user-generated content (UGC) affects digital media usage and content generation in Pakistan. The research examines UGC's effects on credibility and creativity and public opinion and crisis communication through the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI). The research used a quantitative survey method to collect data from 400 participants who were selected through purposive sampling based on their age range of 18 to 45 years and their residence in Punjab. SPSS is used to analyze the data through descriptive and inferential statistics which included Spearman's correlation and independent samples t-tests. The study reveals that participants spent most of their daily time on UGC platforms with YouTube and Instagram being their preferred choices. The survey results show that users primarily consumed UGC for entertainment purposes (41%), as a source of information (20.3%) and for social interaction (20%). The research data represents that UGC frequency correlated weakly with reported opinion change at a significant level ($\rho = 0.109$, $p = .029$). The results show that content creators demonstrated significantly higher perceptions of UGC creative value than non-creators ($t(398) = 2.219$, $p = .027$; Cohen's $d = 1.007$). The research findings indicate no significant connections between UGC frequency and perceptions of quality ($\rho = -0.017$, $p = .729$), credibility ($\rho = -0.018$, $p = .723$), or crisis understanding ($\rho = -0.067$, $p = .181$). The research shows that youth media routines include UGC but its cognitive and societal effects remain restricted or confined to specific contexts. The study suggests that Pakistan should improve digital literacy and content quality to maximize the potential of UGC in its media environment.

1. Introduction

The digital era brought about an unmatched growth of social media platforms and user-generated content, which transformed worldwide media production and consumption habits. The world witnessed 5.04 billion active social media users at the beginning of 2024, which equated to 62.3% of the global population and represented a 266 million user increase from the previous year (Data Reportal, 2024). Social media penetration across the world reached 63.8% during this time, and experts predict it will surpass 6 billion users by 2028 (Statista, 2025). The substantial growth demonstrates how user-generated content has become essential for modern communication and cultural expression.

UGC stands for content that users generate and distribute through videos, posts, reviews, or blogs rather than professional content creators. (Bird Marketing, 2024). The emergence of UGC occurred during a time when traditional media shifted toward a participatory system, which enables users to create and share content (Dijck, 2009; Statista, 2025). The transformation disrupts traditional media organizations while transforming how power operates in public discussions because people now have the power to shape both stories and public attitudes. According to Kim (2012) and Huang (2020), YouTube started as a platform for user content creation, but it has evolved into a central component of the global content industry where amateur content competes with professional media in terms of reach and relevance.

The evolution of marketing trends demonstrates this change because the UGC-driven digital marketing industry was expected to expand from USD 6.7 billion in 2024 to USD 133 billion by 2034 with a 34.8% compound annual growth rate. The market shows that brands and organizations depend more on authentic consumer-generated media to build trust and shape purchasing decisions. Market.us reported in 2024 that UGC outperformed standard advertising according to 93% of marketers who focused on Gen Z and Millennials as their target audience (Market.us, 2024).

UGC also has a notable impact on consumer trust. A 2025 survey showed that 60% of consumers considered UGC the most authentic form of marketing content, and 76% believed that content from average users is more honest than brand-produced content (World Metrics, 2024). Additionally, 85% of consumers trusted UGC more than branded content, and 91% regarded it as more reliable than traditional advertising (ZipDo, 2024). These strong figures highlight UGC's unique position in influencing consumer attitudes.

Internet penetration in Pakistan shows a substantial increase in the current context. The number of internet users in Pakistan reached 116 million during early 2025, which represented 45.7% of the total population (Data Reportal, 2025). The combination of affordable data plans and widespread smartphone adoption in urban areas has led to increased social media usage among young people. The Pakistani digital culture depends on user-generated content (UGC) through YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to provide entertainment, information, and social connections (Abbasi, 2020). The media consumption patterns of Pakistani teenagers have shifted toward social media news updates, according to Huang (2020).

The population of Pakistan maintains a substantial presence across international platforms. The Data Reportal (2024) reports that 49% of Pakistani internet users use TikTok and 62% use YouTube. The large numbers of users who depend on user-generated video content demonstrate the essential role of UGC in daily communication and content engagement.

The numerous benefits of UGC do not eliminate its significant difficulties. The lack of editorial control enables false information and biased content to spread quickly throughout the platform. The risk of misinformation spread is exceptionally high in Pakistan because its citizens have limited media literacy skills and poor abilities to verify information sources (Jonsson, 2011). The system becomes most vulnerable during crises because false information can influence how people think and behave.

Journalists in Pakistan are increasingly using UGC in their reporting, using audience-generated media as primary sources or supporting content, thereby blurring the lines between professional and amateur content (Jamil, 2020). This development enhances the diversity of media narratives but also introduces new pressures related to accuracy, ethics, and verification. Content that reaches broad audiences without editorial checks can impact public perception and civic discourse in profound ways.

The study of UGC impacts stands as a crucial subject. The global shift in media authority and credibility through UGC has produced local effects on audience engagement, information-seeking, and content creation patterns (Daugherty, 2008). The academic study of UGC in Pakistan lacks sufficient research, especially when it comes to its dual function in media production and consumption, both during routine and crisis situations. This research fills this knowledge gap through its analysis of UGC effects on media production methods and audience behavior in Pakistan. This study investigates UGC creation patterns and usage methods, as well as platform choices, user motivations, and beliefs about credibility, creativity, and public influence. This study also examines user conduct during political or national crises to provide a comprehensive empirical understanding of UGC's function in Pakistani digital media.

The rapid growth of Pakistan's digital media industry has led to an increase in user-generated content, which users create and share through YouTube, TikTok, and X platforms. The extensive reach of UGC in Pakistan remains poorly understood despite its significant influence on audience engagement, public opinion, and media production. Research on UGC's sociopolitical and economic crisis communication effects in specific local markets remains scarce despite global studies on branding and consumer behaviour. This research investigates the impact of UGC on digital media production approaches, audience behaviour, trust levels, and public dialogue, particularly during crises, through evidence-based findings about its broader social and economic impacts.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

The worldwide media production and consumption patterns have undergone significant changes because of user-generated content (UGC), but its effects on the Pakistani digital

environment need further investigation. The digital platforms YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram enable millions of Pakistani youth to produce content, but there is insufficient research about how this transformation affects media credibility and creative influence. Researches conducted globally demonstrate how user-generated content enables democratic communication, but these studies fail to analyse the distinct sociopolitical and technological aspects of Pakistan. The lack of editorial control in user-generated content creates challenges for accurate information dissemination, especially during crisis events (Jonsson, 2011). This research investigates the dual impact of UGC on digital content production and consumption in Pakistan to address an essential knowledge gap about digital media in the Global South.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research provides essential insights about Pakistan's media transformation because digital platforms now lead content distribution while undermining traditional media power and transforming trust relationships. User-generated content gives users the power to create content, which transforms their perception of credibility and enables new ways for consumers to interact with brands and build identities and communities. The economic potential of UGC through YouTube and TikTok monetization creates job opportunities for youth but raises concerns about sustainability and regulatory challenges. The research results will help digital marketers create audience-centered campaigns, journalists who want to use UGC in newsrooms, educators who teach digital literacy, and policymakers who work on misinformation and digital access issues to develop culturally sensitive approaches for Pakistan's digital ecosystem.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

To examine how Pakistani digital media users generate and consume User-Generated Content (UGC).

To analyze how User-Generated Content affects digital media content quality and credibility perceptions.

To understand how User-Generated Content influences public opinion formation and discourse development in Pakistan.

To evaluate User-Generated Content's role in crisis communication during political or national emergencies.

2. Literature Review

The following are the details of previous studies conducted on user generated content (UGC) both globally and regionally.

2.1.1 Framing of User-Generated Content (UGC)

User-generated content refers to any form of content (including pictures, videos, reviews, testimonials, tweets, blog posts, etc.) that has been created and put out there by contributors, users, visitors, guests, customers, brand fans, and even creators. (Gallegos, 2025). Van Dijck (2009) described UGC as a shift from one-way media communication to participatory culture,

where users become both content consumers and creators. The growth of platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram has accelerated this shift. Kim (2012) explained how platforms designed initially for amateur creators now also host professional content, blending user and institutional media in complex ways.

In Pakistan, UGC has become a defining feature of digital media culture. Fatima (2025) observed that it is widely used among youth for communication, identity building, and participation in political discourse. As Pakistani users increasingly turn to these platforms for expression and connection, UGC has emerged as a space where both creativity and influence converge.

2.1.2. Motivations Behind UGC Creation and Consumption

The motivations for creating and consuming UGC are diverse and well-explained through the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). According to Daugherty (2008), UGC participation stems from four main gratifications, which include self-expression, information seeking, entertainment, and social interaction. Naab (2017) explained that content creation happens because people want to be recognized while also wishing to join public discussions.

In Pakistan, this motivational framework holds true. According to Fatima (2025), Pakistani youth create content because they want to be seen and they need to belong to social groups while expressing their views about cultural and social matters. Through TikTok and Instagram, users can discover humor content, political discussions, fashion trends, and local traditions while creating digital communities. Sang (2024) explained that emotional engagement stands as a primary motivator because UGC shapes user conduct and mental responses toward products and national events.

2.1.3. UGC's Influence on Media Consumption Behavior

UGC has significantly changed how people consume media. People now choose to obtain news, entertainment, and educational content from content that users generate instead of traditional mainstream media outlets. According to Abbasi (2020), Pakistani teenagers, as noted by Abbasi (2020), rely on social media for news due to their distrust of traditional media sources and preference for user-generated content.

Lew (2014) explained that audiences often perceive UGC as more credible because it appears more authentic and unfiltered than corporate content. User-generated reviews and opinions influence consumer choices, especially when it comes to travel, hospitality, and technology (Ye, 2011). Fatima (2025) discovered that Pakistani audiences tend to believe content when it comes from their peers, influencers, or local voices.

The changing behavior extends beyond what people choose to consume. Dhar (2009) discovered that social media discussions that represent UGC create substantial increases in product or topic visibility. User-generated content functions as a personal, immediate

communication method in media-dense environments to shape both user engagement and perception.

2.1.4. UGC in Content Production and Cultural Narratives

UGC is also transforming content production processes. The traditional media structure operates through hierarchical editorial systems, yet UGC enables decentralized, spontaneous, collaborative content creation. According to Van Dijck (2009), users through UGC can actively participate in cultural record-making instead of merely responding to it. Kim (2012) emphasized that platforms like YouTube enable hybrid content ecosystems where independent voices collaborate with institutional actors to shape public opinion.

In Pakistan, this dynamic is crucial due to restrictions on mainstream media. Fatima (2025) discovered that UGC creators utilize platforms to distribute narratives and satirical content that would generally be barred from mainstream media discussions. Through their roles as citizen journalists, cultural curators, and social commentators, these creators shape both the storytelling methods and the selection of important issues.

The evolution has created new boundaries between individuals who work professionally and those who work as amateurs. The rise of content creators who match mainstream media audiences has led Naab (2017) to question how journalism authority functions alongside content control mechanisms.

2.1.5 Credibility, Misinformation, and Ethics

The advantages of UGC do not eliminate its multiple challenges. Credibility stands as a significant issue. The absence of editorial oversight in UGC creates doubts about the accuracy and authenticity of the content. Naab (2017) discovered that users tend to trust UGC above corporate media, but this trust becomes unreliable when unverified content spreads rapidly.

The commercialization of UGC has led to influencer marketing and sponsored content, which creates confusion between personal opinions and advertisements. Audiences face difficulties in identifying authentic content from paid promotional materials because this distinction complicates their trust and credibility assessment.

The economic systems that operate these platforms do not provide adequate compensation to content creators. Hesmondhalgh (2010) demonstrated that UGC functions as "free labor" because platforms gain value from unpaid user-generated content. Bahtar (2016) observed that UGC content creators face difficulties in earning money from their content, particularly in developing nations, because these countries have restricted access to advertising revenue programs.

The absence of clear systems for monetizing content and owning it creates multiple ethical problems. The growing commercialization of UGC makes it challenging to identify authentic content from sponsored influencer material. The merging of content types weakens both trust in the system and the overall quality of content (Lew, 2014).

2.2 Gaps in the Literature

The growing academic interest in user-generated content (UGC) has not resolved multiple essential research gaps. The majority of existing research about UGC focuses on Western settings, which fails to provide meaningful insights into developing countries such as Pakistan with their unique cultural and social structures and regulatory frameworks. The current research lacks studies that examine both the creation and reception of user-generated content through a unified framework. Most research studies focus on individual aspects of user behavior, such as content creation or trust, without investigating the complete roles users fulfill as both creators and consumers. The current research lacks sufficient investigation into how user-generated content shapes public opinion, digital journalism, and civic participation in Pakistan's changing media environment. The extended impacts of UGC on political consciousness, together with digital competence and social conduct patterns in Pakistan, need further investigation. The understanding of media systems in emerging digital societies requires addressing these research gaps.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The research uses two theories as a theoretical framework that combine the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) with the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI) to examine the impact of user-generated content (UGC) on digital media production and consumption in Pakistan. The chosen frameworks enable researchers to investigate both individual reasons and social dynamics of UGC adoption.

4.1.1 2.3.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) offers an essential framework to understand media engagement because it shows how users take an active part in choosing and using content to fulfill their needs (Katz, 1974). Katz (1974) developed this approach by moving beyond passive audience theories because he saw people as media consumers who set specific goals. According to Katz (1974), people seek four primary gratifications through media consumption, which include information, personal identity, social integration, and entertainment. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) presents a different perspective from earlier media effects theories because it shows audiences actively seek media content to fulfill their cognitive and emotional needs.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) helps explain why people both watch and create user-generated content (UGC) in digital media spaces. Rubin (2009) stated that users seek three main needs, which include psychological gratification, self-expression, and interaction. Shao (2009) discovered that users generate UGC because they want to present themselves, build relationships, and find entertainment. Smock (2011) discovered that user motivations depend on both platform features and content types.

Daugherty (2008) extended the UGC motivation framework by adding cognitive (information-seeking), personal integrative (enhancing credibility), social integrative (connecting

with others), and tension release (entertainment) categories. These categories align with the original categories defined in UGT. Naab (2017) observed that content production and consumption motivations exist differently between various user groups and cultural contexts.

2.3.1.2 Relevance of UGT to the Study

UGT is highly relevant to this study because it explains both why and how individuals interact with UGC in the Pakistani digital ecosystem. In particular, it helps explore the motivations of youth who engage with platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter to consume, create, and share content. The theory supports the analysis of behaviors related to trust, creative participation, opinion expression, and crisis communication, all of which are examined in this research. Furthermore, in contexts where traditional media may be restricted or distrusted, UGT offers insights into why users increasingly rely on peer-driven content for information, identity formation, and public discourse.

The study finds UGT highly relevant because it explains both the reasons and methods through which people interact with UGC in the Pakistani digital environment. The theory enables researchers to understand the reasons behind youth engagement with YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter platforms for content consumption, creation, and sharing. The theory facilitates the examination of trust-related behaviors, creative participation, opinion expression, and crisis communication, which are studied in this research. The theory helps explain why users turn to peer-driven content in situations where traditional media faces restrictions or lacks trust, as they seek information, form identities, and participate in public discussions.

4.1.2 2.3.2. Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI)

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI), developed by Rogers (2003), describes the social process of new ideas, technologies, and behaviors spreading through five stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. The theory shows that five innovation attributes determine adoption success: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability.

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory serves as a widely used framework for social media research. Leung (2009) showed that user-generated content adoption depends on users' perceptions of usefulness and their social engagement with others. Raza et al. (2018) used DOI and TAM to demonstrate that social media acceptance among Pakistani university students depends on social influence, compatibility, and trust factors.

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory offers excellent insights into the rapid adoption of YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram by Pakistani youth, as it examines peer influence, visible leader usage, and trial simplicity. These platforms provide advantages to users, aligning with their lifestyle needs, and their low complexity and high visibility factors drive increased adoption rates.

2.3.2.2 Relevance of DOI to the Study

The study relies on the DOI to understand how UGC, as an innovation, becomes accepted by Pakistani digital culture. The research demonstrates how platform attributes together with peer visibility and opinion leader dynamics influence youth adoption patterns. The theoretical framework of DOI supports the development of research hypotheses about public discourse (H2) and crisis communication (H4) because it demonstrates how perceived usefulness and active engagement rise during political events.

The combination of UGT and DOI provides a complete framework to study the effects of UGC in Pakistan. The dual-theory framework enables this study to analyze both user behaviors and gratifications of UGC and its wider social effects on media credibility, content production, and crisis communication.

2.4 Hypotheses

H1: User Generated Content positively influences the quality of digital media content in Pakistan.
H2: Users who frequently engage with user-generated content are more likely to report changes in their opinions.
H3: User Generated Content creation is positively associated with the perceived impact on media creativity.
H4: A Higher frequency of consuming user-generated content is positively associated with users' perception of its credibility on digital media platforms.
H5: Exposure to user-generated content during national or political crises significantly enhances users' understanding of the situation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. This research applies a quantitative method for variable relationship testing, which supports the investigation of UGC effects. The research method of cross-sectional design suits this study because it gathers information from numerous participants during a single period to evaluate how Pakistani youth interact with UGC.

4.1.3 3.2. Target Population

The target population for this study comprises individuals aged 18 to 45 years who reside in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

4.1.4 3.3. Sampling Technique

The research adopted purposive random sampling to choose participants from different divisions in Punjab to achieve geographical representation in the study. The research drew students from nine university divisions across Punjab, including Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Sargodha, Bahawalpur, Sahiwal, and Dera Ghazi Khan.

4.1.5 3.4 Sample Size

The research obtained 400 valid responses, which exceeded the minimum required sample size to achieve 95% confidence and a ±5% margin of error in a large population**.**

3.5 Variables of the Study

The research contains independent variables and dependent variables that are defined as follows:

4.1.6 3.5.1 Independent Variables (IVs)

The independent variables serve as the variables that researchers believe affect or forecast changes in dependent variables. This study examines three independent variables:

1. **Frequency of UGC Consumption:** The extent to which participants engage with user-generated content regularly (e.g., daily, weekly).
2. **UGC Creation Activity:** The study examines participants who actively generate content through videos, posts, and memes.

3. Exposure to UGC during Crises: The level of user interaction with UGC during political or national emergencies.

4.1.7 3.5.2 Dependent Variables (DVs)

The dependent variables represent the outcomes influenced by the independent variables. This study investigates three dependent variables:

1. **Perceived Credibility of UGC:** The degree to which users find UGC trustworthy or believable, particularly during crises.
2. **Influence on Public Opinion and Social Discourse:** The extent to which users feel that UGC shapes societal or political discussions.
3. **Perceived Impact on Creativity and Content Diversity:** Users' belief that UGC contributes to innovative or diverse content on digital platforms.
4. **Understanding of National or Political Crises:** Users' self-reported comprehension of social or political events due to their exposure to UGC.

The variables have been operationalized through particular survey items, which will be analyzed by suitable statistical methods to test the proposed hypotheses.

3.6 Data Collection Instrument

4.1.8 3.6.1 Survey Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool that included both closed-ended and multiple-choice items measured through a 5-point Likert scale. The survey contained four main sections that focused on different aspects of the research.

1. **Demographics:** Age, gender, division, occupation
2. **UGC Consumption Habits:** frequency, platform, duration, purpose
3. **UGC Creation Habits:** Type of content created, platforms used, monetization

4. **Perceived Impact of UGC:** Trust, creativity, influence on public opinion, crisis communication

The survey questionnaire stemmed from existing research by Daugherty et al. (2008) before being modified to fit the Pakistani digital environment.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was evaluated to verify its reliability and content validity. Thirty participants took part in a pilot test to assess both the clarity and consistency of the questionnaire. The research team implemented modifications after obtaining feedback from participants. The reliability test of Likert scale items used Cronbach's alpha, which resulted in a 0.81 score, indicating acceptable reliability.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Researchers gathered data from Google Forms and university field visits during a four-week period. The participants received information about the research goal and guarantees of confidentiality protection. The research complied with ethical standards by making participation voluntary and maintaining anonymity.

3.9 Data Analysis Techniques

SPSS Version 27 Statistical Package for Social Sciences processed the collected data for statistical evaluation. The analysis included the following steps:

1. The study used descriptive statistics to compute frequencies, together with percentages, as well as means and standard deviations for both demographic information and behavioral data.
2. The study employed inferential statistics to test hypotheses:
3. The research employed Pearson correlation to establish connections between study variables (e.g., UGC use and trust)
4. The study applied independent sample t-tests to establish differences between groups, such as creators versus non-creators.
5. The analysis used one-way ANOVA to evaluate demographic differences and chi-square tests to evaluate categorical variable relationships.
6. Hypothesis testing used a $p < 0.05$ significance level.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The research team obtained consent from participants before starting their participation. All data participants were guaranteed that their information would stay completely private while their identities remained protected. No personal identifiers were collected. The research obtained approval through the university ethics review board.

4. Data Analysis & Findings

This chapter presents both quantitative findings to provide a comprehensive analysis of the study. It explores statistical results derived from surveys and SPSS analysis.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The following are the demographics of the respondents as per the responses.

4.1.9 Respondents by Gender

Table No 1: Gender of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	178	44.5	44.5	44.5
	Female	222	55.5	55.5	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that in selected gender the total respondents were 400 in which 178 respondents were male (44.5%) and 222 respondents were female (55.5%).

4.1.10 Respondents by Age

Table No 2: Age of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-22	21	5.3	5.3	5.3
	23-27	238	59.5	59.5	64.8
	28–32	126	31.5	31.5	96.3
	33–37	6	1.5	1.5	97.8
	38-45	9	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, 238 (59.5%) were between the ages of 23–27, followed by 126 respondents (31.5%) aged 28–32. The remaining included 21 respondents (5.3%) aged 18–22, 6 respondents (1.5%) aged 33–37, and 9 respondents (2.3%) who were between 38–45 years old.

4.1.11 4.1.3 Respondents by Division

Table 4.3: Division of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Lahore	39	9.8	9.8	9.8
	Faisalabad	50	12.5	12.5	22.3
	Rawalpindi	26	6.5	6.5	28.8
	Multan	50	12.5	12.5	41.3
	Gujranwala	50	12.5	12.5	53.8
	Bahawalpur	42	10.5	10.5	64.3
	DG Khan	26	6.5	6.5	70.8
	Sahiwal	50	12.5	12.5	83.3
	Gujrat	43	10.8	10.8	94.0
	Sargodha	24	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that the respondents were selected from various divisions of Punjab. The largest share came from Gujranwala Division with 50 respondents (12.5%), followed by Multan and Faisalabad with 48 respondents (12%) each. Lahore and Rawalpindi had 45 respondents each (11.3%). Bahawalpur contributed 43 respondents (10.8%), and the smallest shares were from DG Khan (32 respondents, 8%), Sahiwal (42 respondents, 10.5%), and Sargodha (47 respondents, 11.8%).

3.9.1 Respondents by Profession

Table No 4: Profession of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Student	283	70.8	70.8	70.8
	Employed	58	14.5	14.5	85.3
	Unemployed	38	9.5	9.5	94.8
	Other	21	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, the majority were students (283 respondents, 70.8%), followed by employed individuals (58 respondents, 14.5%). Other occupational categories included 32 retired participants (8%) and 27 respondents (6.8%) listed as "Other".

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1 UGC Consumption Patterns

4.2.1.1 Frequency of UGC Consumption

Table No 5: Frequency of UGC Consumption

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	212	53.0	53.0	53.0
	A few times a week	118	29.5	29.5	82.5
	Once a Week	47	11.8	11.8	94.3
	Several times a month	9	2.3	2.3	96.5
	Rarely	14	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, 212 (53.0%) consume UGC daily, 118 (29.5%) a few times a week, 47 (11.8%) once a week, 9 (2.3%) several times a month, and 14 (3.5%) rarely consume UGC.

4.1.12 4.2.1.2 Time Spent on UGC Daily

Table No 6: Time Spent on UGC Daily

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 1 hour	75	18.8	18.8	18.8
	1 - 2 hours	114	28.5	28.5	47.3
	2 - 3 hours	112	28.0	28.0	75.3
	4 - 5 hours	52	13.0	13.0	88.3
	More than 5 hours	47	11.8	11.8	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, 114 (28.5%) spend 1–2 hours on UGC daily, followed by 112 (28.0%) who spend 2–3 hours, 75 (18.8%) who spend less than 1 hour, 52 (13.0%) who spend 4–5 hours, and 47 (11.8%) who spend more than 5 hours.

4.1.13 4.2.1.3 Types of UGC Consumed

Table No 7: Types of UGC Consumed

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Videos	61	15.3	15.3	15.3
	Social Media Posts	115	28.8	28.8	44.0
	Memes	45	11.3	11.3	55.3
	Images	34	8.5	8.5	63.8
	Podcasts	43	10.8	10.8	74.5
	Reviews	71	17.8	17.8	92.3
	Hashtag Campaigns	21	5.3	5.3	97.5
	Tutorials	10	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, the most consumed UGC type was social media posts (115 respondents, 28.8%), followed by reviews (71, 17.8%), videos (61, 15.3%), memes (45, 11.3%), podcasts (43, 10.8%), images (34, 8.5%), hashtag campaigns (21, 5.3%), and tutorials (10, 2.5%).

4.1.14 4.2.1.4 Platforms Used for UGC Consumption

Table No 8: Platforms Used for UGC Consumption

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Youtube	23	5.8	5.8	5.8
	Facebook	125	31.3	31.3	37.0
	Instagram	188	47.0	47.0	84.0
	TikTok	23	5.8	5.8	89.8
	Twitter (X)	33	8.3	8.3	98.0
	Other	8	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, the majority consumed UGC on Instagram (188 respondents, 47.0%), followed by Facebook (125, 31.3%), Twitter/X (33, 8.3%), YouTube and TikTok (23 each, 5.8%), and other platforms (8, 2.0%).

4.1.15 4.2.1.5 Motivations for Consuming UGC

Table No 9: Motivations for Consuming UGC

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Entertainment	164	41	41	41
	Information	81	20.3	20.3	61.3
	Social interaction	80	20.0	20.0	81.3
	Learning	45	11.3	11.3	92.6
	Expressing opinions	30	7.4	7.4	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, the majority consumed user-generated content (UGC) for entertainment purposes (41%). This was followed by those who used UGC to seek information (20.3%), engage in social interaction (20%), and support their learning (11.3%). A smaller segment (7.4%) reported using UGC for expressing opinions.

4.2.2 UGC Production Patterns

4.1.16 4.2.2.1 UGC Producers (Content Creators)

Table No 10: UGC Producers (Content Creators)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	223	55.8	55.8	55.8
	No	177	44.3	44.3	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, 223 (55.8%) identified as UGC producers, while 177 (44.3%) stated they do not create user-generated content.

4.1.17 4.2.2.2 Frequency of UGC Creation

Table No 11: Frequency of UGC Creation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	59	14.8	26.5	26.5
	A few times a week	63	15.8	28.3	54.7
	Once a Week	56	14.0	25.1	79.8
	Rarely	45	11.3	20.2	100.0
	Total	223	55.8	100.0	
Missing	System	177	44.3		
Total		**400**	**100.0**		

Among the 223 UGC creators, 63 (28.3%) create content a few times a week, 59 (26.5%) daily, 56 (25.1%) once a week, and 45 (20.2%) create content rarely.

4.1.18 4.2.2.3 Platforms Used for Content Sharing

Table No 12: Platforms Used for Content Sharing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Youtube	58	14.5	26.0	26.0
	Facebook	16	4.0	7.2	33.2
	Instagram	113	28.3	50.7	83.9
	TikTok	17	4.3	7.6	91.5
	Twitter (X)	8	2.0	3.6	95.1
	Other	11	2.8	4.9	100.0
	Total	223	55.8	100.0	
Missing	System	177	44.3		
Total		**400**	**100.0**		

Among the 223 content creators, Instagram was the most used platform (113 respondents, 50.7%), followed by YouTube (58, 26.0%), TikTok (17, 7.6%), Facebook (16, 7.2%), Other platforms (11, 4.9%), and Twitter/X (8, 3.6%).

4.1.19 4.2.2.4 Monetization of UGC

Table No 13: Monetization of UGC

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	36	9.0	16.1	16.1
	No	187	46.8	83.9	100.0
	Total	223	55.8	100.0	
Missing	System	177	44.3		
Total		**400**	**100.0**		

Among the 223 UGC producers, only 36 (16.1%) respondents reported earning revenue from their content, while 187 (83.9%) did not monetize their content.

4.1.20 4.2.3 UGC and Public Opinion

Table No 14: UGC and Public Opinion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	52	13.0	13.0	13.0
	Agree	163	40.8	40.8	53.8
	Neutral	106	26.5	26.5	80.3
	Disagree	59	14.8	14.8	95.0
	Strongly Disagree	20	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, 163 (40.8%) agreed that UGC influences public opinion, 106 (26.5%) were neutral, 59 (14.8%) disagreed, 52 (13.0%) strongly agreed, and 20 (5.0%) strongly disagreed.

4.1.21 4.2.4 UGC and Perceived Credibility

Table No 15: UGC and Perceived Credibility

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	65	16.3	16.3	16.3
	Agree	154	38.5	38.5	54.8
	Neutral	99	24.8	24.8	79.5
	Disagree	62	15.5	15.5	95.0
	Strongly Disagree	20	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, 154 (38.5%) agreed UGC is credible, 99 (24.8%) remained neutral, 65 (16.3%) strongly agreed, 62 (15.5%) disagreed, and 20 (5.0%) strongly disagreed.

4.1.22 4.2.5 UGC and Perceived Creativity Impact

Table No 16: UGC and Perceived Creativity Impact

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	58	14.5	14.5	14.5
	Agree	173	43.3	43.3	57.8
	Neutral	90	22.5	22.5	80.3
	Disagree	56	14.0	14.0	94.3
	Strongly Disagree	23	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, 173 (43.3%) agreed that UGC enhances creativity, 90 (22.5%) remained neutral, 58 (14.5%) strongly agreed, 56 (14.0%) disagreed, and 23 (5.8%) strongly disagreed.

4.1.23 4.2.6 UGC and Crisis Communication

Table No 17: UGC and Crisis Communication

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	50	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Agree	165	41.3	41.3	53.8
	Neutral	103	25.8	25.8	79.5
	Disagree	62	15.5	15.5	95.0
	Strongly Disagree	20	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	**400**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table shows that out of 400 respondents, 165 (41.3%) agreed that UGC is useful in crisis communication, 103 (25.8%) remained neutral, 62 (15.5%) disagreed, 50 (12.5%) strongly agreed, and 20 (5.0%) strongly disagreed.

4.3 Hypotheses Testing

4.1.24 4.3.1 UGC and Perceived Content Quality

Table No 18: Spearman Correlation between UGC Consumption and Content Quality

			UGC Consumption	Content Quality
Spearman's rho	UGC Consumption	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-0.017
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.729
		N	400	400
	Content Quality	Correlation Coefficient	-0.017	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.729	
		N	**400**	**400**

Table presents the result of a Spearman correlation test between frequency of UGC consumption and perceived quality of digital content. The result shows a very weak negative correlation ($\rho = -0.017$, $p = .729$). Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the result is not statistically significant. This means there is no meaningful relationship between how often people use UGC and how much they believe it improves content quality. Therefore, H1 is not supported.

4.3.2 UGC Engagement and Opinion Formation

Table No 19: Spearman Correlation between UGC Consumption and Perceived Impact on Opinion

			UGC Consumption	Opinion Formation
Spearman's rho	UGC Consumption	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.109*
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.029
		N	400	400
	Opinion Formation	Correlation Coefficient	.109*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.029	
		N	**400**	**400**

Table shows the relationship between how often users consume UGC and whether they report changes in their opinions. The correlation is weak but positive ($\rho = 0.109$), and it is statistically significant ($p = .029 < .05$). This means that people who use UGC more often are slightly more likely to say their views have changed because of it. Therefore, **H2 is supported**.

4.1.25 4.3.3 UGC Production and Perceived Creativity

Table No 20: Group Statistics – Perceived Creativity by UGC Creation

UGC Production		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Perceived Creativity	Yes	223	2.55	1.034	0.069
	No	177	2.32	0.973	0.073

Table shows the mean scores and standard deviations for perceived creativity among UGC creators and non-creators. Content creators had a higher average score (M ≈ 2.69), while non-creators scored lower (M ≈ 2.46). This suggests that users who create content tend to view UGC as more creative compared to those who do not create content.

Table No 21: Independent Samples T-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		**t-test for Equality of Means**						
		F	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**	**95% Confidence Interval of the Difference**	
									Lower	**Upper**
Perceived Creativity	Equal variances assumed	1.293	0.256	2.219	398	0.027	0.225	0.101	0.026	0.424
	Equal variances not assumed			2.235	386.610	0.026	0.225	0.101	0.027	0.423

Table a **significant difference** in mean scores (t(398) = 2.219, p = .027), with content creators perceiving UGC as more creative than non-creators. The mean difference of **0.225** indicates a small but meaningful gap, and the **95% confidence interval** [0.026, 0.424] does not cross zero, further confirming statistical significance. Therefore, **Hypothesis 3 is supported**. This suggests that individuals who actively produce UGC are more likely to view it as a tool for creative expression and innovation on digital platforms. These findings align with UGT's focus on self-expression as a core gratification for digital participation.

Table No 22: Effect Size – Cohen's d, Hedges' g, and Glass's Delta

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Perceived Creativity	Cohen's d	1.007	0.223	0.025	0.421
	Hedges' correction	1.009	0.223	0.025	0.420
	Glass's delta	**0.973**	**0.231**	**0.032**	**0.430**

The calculated **Cohen's d = 1.007** indicates a **large effect size**, meaning the difference in perceived creativity between UGC creators and non-creators is not only statistically significant but also **substantively meaningful**. Both **Hedges' g** and **Glass's delta** support this finding, confirming a strong and consistent effect.

With both statistical significance (p = .027) and a large effect size (d = 1.007)**,** Hypothesis 3 is strongly supported**.**

4.3.4 UGC Consumption Frequency and Credibility

Table No 23: Spearman Correlation between UGC Consumption Frequency and Credibility

			UGC Consumption	UGC Credibility
Spearman's rho	UGC Consumption	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-0.018
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.723
		N	400	400
	UGC Credibility	Correlation Coefficient	-0.018	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.723	
		N	**400**	**400**

Table shows a very weak negative correlation (ρ = –0.018) between how often users consume UGC and how credible they think it is. The p-value is .723, which is not significant. This means frequency of UGC use does not influence users' trust in it. Therefore, H4 is not supported.

4.3.5 UGC Exposure and Crisis Understanding

Table No 24: Spearman Correlation Analysis between UGC Consumption and Crisis Understanding

			UGC Consumption	Crisis Understanding
Spearman's rho	UGC Consumption	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-0.067
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.181
		N	400	400
	Crisis Understanding	Correlation Coefficient	-0.067	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.181	
		N	**400**	**400**

Table shows the relationship between UGC consumption and how well users understand political or national crises. The correlation is weak and negative (ρ = –0.067), and it is not statistically significant (p = .181). This means that more exposure to UGC during a crisis does not significantly improve users' understanding. Therefore, **H5 is not supported**.

4.4 Discussions

This study explored the influence of user-generated content (UGC) on digital media production and consumption patterns in Pakistan. The survey of 400 respondents indicated that most participants belonged to young adult ages between 23 and 27 while students comprised the biggest occupational group. The two most used social media channels for content viewing and production are YouTube and Instagram. The DOI framework supports this observation because active youth populations tend to adopt UGC innovations that match their technological usage patterns which Kim (2012) also demonstrated through his study of YouTube institutionalization.

The descriptive findings demonstrated that most participants check UGC daily for entertainment and social purposes and to stay updated. The motivations expressed by users in the UGT research are identical to those found in UGT research because users actively choose media that satisfies their psychological and social requirements. Daugherty (2008) supports this discovery by demonstrating that UGC users choose content based on cognitive as well as social and emotional benefits.

The statistical test for Hypothesis 1 indicated no significant relationship between UGC consumption frequency and perceived content quality improvement (ρ = –0.017, p =.729). The research by Timoshenko (2019) found UGC to improve product development quality and perceived value in marketing scenarios yet the present study demonstrated no such relationship between UGC consumption and quality perception among Pakistan's digital audience.

A similar pattern emerged for Hypothesis 4, which tested the relationship between UGC consumption and credibility (ρ = –0.018, p =.723). Dhar (2009) documented UGC's impact on

market behavior and user trust in product reviews but the present study discovered no significant connection between UGC consumption and credibility in the Pakistani digital environment.

The results of Hypothesis 2 revealed that frequent UGC engagement generated a weak positive correlation which reached statistical significance ($\rho = 0.109$, $p = .029$). Shao (2009) supports this finding as he demonstrated that user-generated content plays a crucial role in both identity creation and public discussions. Van Dijck (2009) proposed that digital participation enables people to develop personalized agency when commenting on social issues. The modest strength of this finding backs the argument that UGC acts as a catalyst for personal viewpoint transformation particularly among young people.

The third hypothesis examined whether users who create UGC content view this medium as more creative than users who do not create UGC. The independent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant outcome where creators demonstrated greater average creativity perception compared to non-creators ($t(398) = 2.219$, $p = .027$). The effect size measured large (Cohen's $d = 1.007$). The research of Daugherty (2008) supports the findings which show that self-expression stands as the fundamental reason UGC creators produce content. The research of Bahtar (2016) demonstrated how UGC enables users to engage creatively with digital tools through dynamic methods. The findings confirm UGT's prediction that media consumption satisfies users' needs for creative self-expression.

The research investigated whether UGC exposure during crisis situations leads to improved user comprehension (Hypothesis 5). A weak and statistically insignificant relationship existed between UGC exposure and crisis comprehension according to the Spearman correlation analysis ($\rho = –0.067$, $p = .181$). The data shows that UGC consumption does not lead to better crisis comprehension despite higher usage rates. The research by Naab (2017) matches these findings since they pointed out that UGC lacks editorial supervision thus it cannot be relied upon during critical events. The combination of political polarization and unregulated digital content in Pakistan worsens this issue.

The research findings indicate UGC plays an important role in daily digital activities yet its effect on trust and content quality and crisis literacy remains minimal or depends on specific contexts. The findings support mixed research in global studies which demonstrates the necessity for content moderation along with improved digital literacy and support systems for high-quality user-generated content. The research delivers crucial knowledge about UGC development in Pakistan's digital landscape while providing groundwork for future studies utilizing comparative or longitudinal research methods.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to examine the effects of user-generated content on digital media usage patterns among Pakistani people and their media creation activities. The research used quantitative methods to evaluate five hypotheses based on UGT and DOI. The study

showed that social media users widely consume UGC but their perception about its influence differs from one dimension to another.

The research data confirmed two hypotheses which demonstrated that people who use UGC frequently experience changes in their opinions (H2) and content creators view UGC as more creative (H3). The research did not validate the three hypotheses that examined content quality (H1) credibility (H4) and crisis understanding (H5).

The research demonstrates that users actively use UGC for personal and social benefits yet they remain skeptical about its quality and trustworthiness and crisis-related usefulness. The findings demonstrate a difference between user engagement and perceived value which shows that adoption does not automatically lead to cognitive effects.

The digital media environment of Pakistan depends heavily on user-generated content as a complex factor. The potential of UGC can be optimized through efforts to verify content authenticity and promote critical thinking and media literacy education. Future research needs to employ longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to monitor how user perceptions transform throughout time and across different demographic groups.

5.1 Recommendations

This research produces the following recommendations based on its findings:

1. The implementation of digital media literacy programs at universities and public institutions should be promoted to help users assess the credibility and bias in user-generated content.
2. The creation of responsible UGC content should be supported through platforms and institutions by providing guidelines and resources to help youth produce high-quality, ethical content.
3. Digital platforms need to establish improved verification and moderation systems which should specifically target misinformation during crisis situations.
4. Future studies need to use mixed-method research by adding qualitative methods, including interviews and focus groups, to understand user assessments of UGC beyond standardized scales.
5. Research needs to expand its geographical focus to include other provinces and rural areas of Pakistan to enhance generalizability while studying digital trends across the nation.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

The study is subject to the following limitations:

1. The research sample consists of digital media users from Punjab, but it does not represent the entire population of Pakistan, especially the rural areas and older population.
2. The survey design based on one point in time may not show the changes in UGC behavior over time.
3. The survey data collected from participants may contain response biases because of social desirability bias.

4. The study had to limit its sample size to 400 participants due to resource constraints. Although this sample size is statistically valid, it may not be generalizable to other regions.

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