

# Maximizing Customer Loyalty Through Instagram-Based Engagement Strategies: A Content Analysis Of The Beauty Industry

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## Abstract

*The beauty industry is increasingly leveraging digital platforms, particularly Instagram, to encourage customer engagement and enhance brand experiences. With the growing emphasis on content-driven marketing, Instagram has emerged as a key channel for customer engagement, brand advocacy, and customer loyalty. To explore the strategic content of Instagram organic posts in enhancing customer loyalty through effective engagement within the beauty industry. To investigate the effects of different content types of Instagram on customer engagement, such as customer loyalty based on the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). This conceptual paper utilizes a data-driven approach to analyze articles retrieved from databases (PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science), covering the period from 2014 to 2025. Thematic analysis showed that emotional and cognitive content gratification, such as UGC, tutorials, and influencers' collaborations, show higher engagement (likes, shares, comments, and saves). Emotional, interactive, and personalized content significantly enhances customer engagement and customer loyalty in the beauty industry. Emotional content, such as storytelling, emerged as the strongest customer loyalty.*

**Keywords:** Customer Engagement, Customer Loyalty, Beauty Industry, and Uses and Gratification Theory.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

In the digital age, Instagram has become an essential platform for brand-consumer interaction, especially within visually driven industries like beauty (Scott, 2024). The visual, interactive, and community-driven nature of Instagram makes it uniquely suited to support customer relationship-building through meaningful engagement. However, despite Instagram's popularity, the earned media value (EMV) in the beauty sector declined significantly, from \$1.18 billion in Q1 2024 to \$847.6 million in Q1 2025, signaling diminishing returns on current social media content strategies (Schulz, 2025). This decline reflects an urgent need for beauty brands to reassess their content strategies and explore more sustainable engagement tactics through organic (non-sponsored) posts.

This study aims to investigate how strategic organic Instagram content enhances customer loyalty through effective user engagement in the beauty industry. As customer expectations evolve, brands must go beyond product promotions and invest in meaningful storytelling and value-based content (Mir & Salo, 2023). Instagram has become an important mechanism through which brands engage with customers, and its content types such as user-generated content (UGC), behind-the-scenes videos, interactive polls, and educational tutorials. These create authentic brand narratives that resonate with followers and support emotional connectivity.

This study employs the UGT (Uses and Gratification Theory), which suggests that individuals actively select the media to fulfill their specific needs, such as information, entertainment, social connection, and

identity reinforcement. UGT has proven useful and informative in analyzing user motivations on social media platforms such as Instagram, especially in a marketing context. For example, Kulikovskaja et al.(2023b) demonstrated that UGT dimensions such as information-seeking and entertainment were significant predictors of user engagement on social media. They noted that content that fulfilled these needs was more likely to lead to repeated interaction, trust, and eventual brand loyalty.

Similarly, Sajjad & Zaman (2020) found that motivations such as self-enhancement, perceived value, and habit formation influenced users' decisions to follow and engage with brands on Instagram. Their study supports the idea that content aligned with gratifications can meaningfully impact long-term engagement and loyalty. Within the beauty industry, strategic organic content can shape brand loyalty by offering real-life applications of products, behind-the-scenes operations, and personal stories from customers and influencers. Campaigns like L'Oréal Paris's "Walk Your Worth", which embraced authenticity and inclusivity, successfully resonated with followers and generated a strong emotional response (Vogue Business Team, 2024).

Despite these developments, there is a notable research gap in the study of organic Instagram content (as opposed to influencer marketing or paid promotions) and its direct relationship with customer loyalty in the beauty sector (Bastrygina et al., 2024a). Much of the current literature focuses on influencer partnerships or advertising campaigns, leaving the impact of day-to-day organic brand content underexplored. Moreover, the application of UGT to Instagram content in the beauty industry is still in its infancy. While UGT has been used to understand general social media behavior, few studies have used it to explain why specific types of Instagram posts (e.g., tutorials vs. brand stories) resonate differently among consumers and how these preferences drive loyalty.

There is also limited exploration of qualitative engagement, such as emotional reactions, narrative alignment, and identity expression, which are crucial components of brand loyalty but are not easily measured by likes or shares (Febrian & Husna, 2023). This gap is significant considering that beauty purchases are often influenced by personal values, confidence, and emotional connection with the brand. In addition, with Instagram's shift toward Reels and short-form video in 2024–2025, content types that prioritize relatability and storytelling have become even more critical for engagement. Brands are under pressure to adapt quickly while ensuring that content still aligns with user needs as defined by UGT.

## 1.2 Objectives

Thus, this study aims to address the following objectives, grounded in both empirical observation and theoretical frameworks:

- I) To explore the strategic content of Instagram organic posts in enhancing customer loyalty through effective engagement within the beauty industry.
- II) To investigate the effects of different content types of Instagram on customer engagement, such as customer loyalty based on the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT).

By integrating theoretical insights from UGT with current trends in Instagram marketing, this study seeks to provide actionable strategies for beauty brands to improve their organic content planning. Furthermore, it contributes to academic discourse by filling a critical literature gap concerning the non-paid content strategies that influence customer loyalty in a highly visual, competitive market.

## 1.3 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on exploring how organic Instagram content influences the customer engagement and loyalty in the beauty industry. Content types such as influencer collaborations, user-generated content (UGC), behind-the-scenes content, interactive posts (e.g., polls, Q&As), and tutorials. The research is conceptual and is based on secondary data including industry reports, academic literature, and Instagram posts by Indian brands between 2022 and 2025. The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) serves as the theoretical framework. Paid promotions are excluded in this study, as the emphasis is on organic brand content.

## **2. Literature Review**

This study emphasizes the importance of Instagram content for customer engagement (CE). CE marketing explores how businesses interact with customers. However, there is limited research on the mediating role of CE between content-related factors, engagement, and outcomes. This section reviews relevant studies in the context of Instagram interactions.

### **2.1 Applications of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) to Instagram Content**

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) explains why and how individuals actively seek out specific media to satisfy their personal needs (Blumler, 2019b), UGT theories view audiences as passive and active participants who choose media content based on the gratifications they seek. In the context of social media, UGT suggests that users engage with brand content to fulfill needs such as entertainment, information seeking, emotional support, and social interaction. Informative posts meet cognitive needs by providing knowledge, social content fulfills relational needs, and entertaining content satisfies affective needs by promoting a sense of belonging.

Applying UGT to this research explains why different types of Instagram content influence customer engagement behaviors. Beauty brands offering content that aligns with customers' needs can better attract attention, user interaction, and build customer loyalty.

### **2.2 Role of Content Type in Engagement**

Different content type serves different customer needs. Informative content delivers useful information, enhancing trust in brands and helping customers make better decisions. Previous research shows that informative, rich posts lead to higher credibility and engagement rates (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2020c). Entertaining content aims to emotionally or amuse the audience. Content that sparks positive emotions, such as humor, joy, or excitement, leads to an increase (likes, shares, and comments), emotional responses are crucial for sustaining Instagram engagement (Elsantil et al., 2025). Social content focuses on community building by encouraging interactions and user participation. Posts that feature customer-generated content, invite opinions or ask questions, feature customer-generated content make followers feel valued and connected to the brand (Habibi et al., 2014).

### **2.3 Social Media Marketing and Customer Engagement**

Social media platforms like Instagram have transformed how customers and beauty brands interact. Beauty brands now create two-way communication and direct channels that promote stronger engagement (Cao et al., 2020). Customer engagement refers to cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with brand content on social media. Higher customer satisfaction is linked to positive customer attitudes and behaviors, such as customer loyalty and advocacy (Brodie, Ilic, et al., 2011).

### **2.4 Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty**

Customer engagement is a strong predictor of customer loyalty on the Instagram platform. Engaged customers feel emotionally connected and are more likely to recommend and repurchase the brand to others. Several studies confirm that higher engagement increases customer retention and lifetime value (Hollebeek, 2010). In the beauty industry, brand image and emotional connection are essential for effective engagement strategies for developing long-term loyalty among customers.

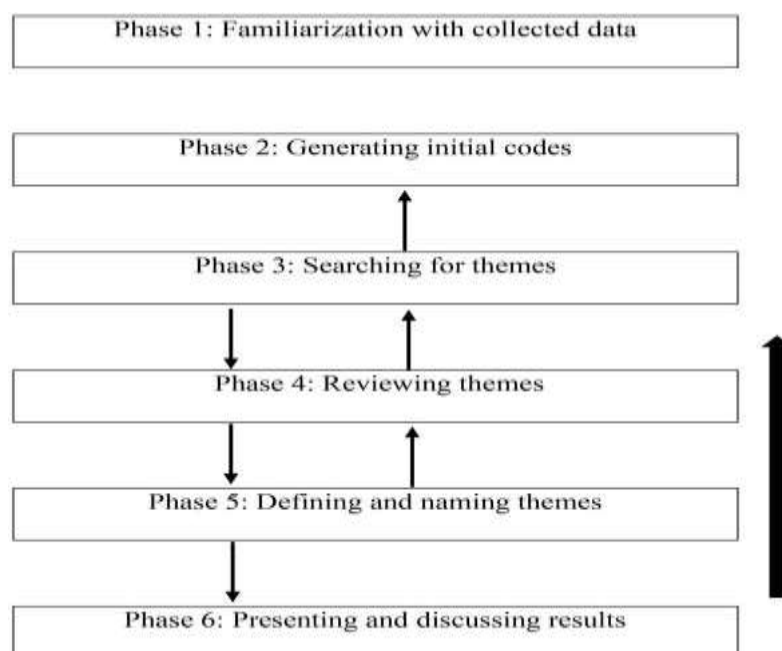
**Table1: Customer Engagement Literature.**

Author(s) and Year	Research Type	Platform	Theoretical Framework	Focus of Study	Key Findings
Santini et al. (2020)	Empirical (Meta-Analysis)	Instagram	Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)	How social media content influences customer engagement	Educational, entertaining, and social content drives positive engagement behaviors.
García-de-Frutos & Estrella-Ramón (2020)	Empirical (Survey)	Social Media	Emotional Engagement Models	Emotional impact on social media engagement	Emotional content significantly increases the intensity of engagement.
Blut et al. (2023)	Empirical (Quantitative)	Instagram	UGT and CE Theory	Consumer responses to emotional and informative content	Positive emotional content leads to stronger engagement and loyalty outcomes.
Agrawal & Mittal (2022)	Empirical (Qualitative)	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	UGT	Influence of luxury brand content on engagement	Educational and emotional posts increase brand-consumer interaction.
Obilo et al. (2021)	Empirical (Quantitative)	Facebook Brand Pages	Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Model	Customer engagement from content stimuli	Content type affects emotional responses, leading to engagement and co-creation.
De Vries & Carlson (2014)	Empirical (Survey)	Facebook and Instagram	Engagement Behavior Model	Antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement	Informative and visually appealing posts significantly enhance engagement rates.

### 3. Research Methodology

The research uses a qualitative research design to investigate how Instagram-based customer engagement strategies contribute to maximum customer loyalty in the beauty industry. This data is collected and analyzed using secondary data from existing research papers such as social media papers, industry reports, and social media analytics (Neuendorf, 2017). In this method, brands enable in-depth exploration of how brands utilize Instagram strategies effectively to engage with the user and build long-term relationships and customer loyalty without requiring primary data. Data was collected from reputed secondary sources to ensure a broad and holistic understanding of the topic (García-De-Frutos & Estrella-Ramón, 2021). The study provides the theoretical and empirical insights of social media marketing, Influencer marketing, beauty brands, and digital marketing. Platforms like HubSpot and Statista provide valuable context on current practices in Instagram Marketing, like research reports, marketing consultancies, and trend forecasts (Rohit et al., 2025). A content analysis was conducted on organic Instagram posts and campaigns from leading beauty brands. This includes official accounts of Indian beauty brands with large followings. Content types analyzed include influencer collaborations, tutorials, aesthetic visuals, giveaways, user-generated content (UGC), and interactive features like polls and Q&As. For example, Gołąb-Andrzejak (2022b) conducted a content analysis of beauty brands' engagement on TikTok, while Prakash et al. (2024) analyzed secondary data to understand the influencer and digital marketing effectiveness in the cosmetic industry.

A Thematic analysis framework, as illustrated in Figure 1, provides a structured method to analyze the qualitative data. It supports the objectives by identifying patterns in user engagement and content strategies that influence customer loyalty (Marcoux et al., 2021). The method supports the theme and sub-themes, such as reward-based engagement, emotional connection, interactive participation, and trust transfer from influencers were developed. Moreover, social media and media insights analysis focusing on hashtags and keywords such as “customer loyalty through reels”, “Instagram beauty brands engagement”, and “UGC in Instagram marketing” helped refine the dataset to content directly to the research objective. This research was supported by qualitative examples from brand posts and supported with relevant engagement metrics. Unrelated Instagram platforms and content irrelevant to loyalty were excluded to maintain focus on platform-specific strategies.



**Fig. 1 Thematic analysis Framework (Mayor & Bietti, 2025)**

### 3.1 Ethical Approval

The research was reviewed and approved by the institutional ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The study maintained strict confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process.

### 4. Results

The qualitative data is analyzed using thematic analysis. All content, including Instagram posts, website, Journal articles, and case studies of meetings, was independently reviewed to ensure accuracy and consistency. An inductive approach was adopted, allowing themes and concepts to naturally emerge from the data without being pre-imposed. Line-by-line open coding allowed for systematic identification of users' sentiments, emotional tones, and behavioral patterns in various Instagram content types, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how different formats of engagement and customer loyalty. The analysis of sub-themes such as gratification sought (cognitive, emotional, and reward-based) and their impact on customer engagement behavior (likes, shares, comments, and saves) and loyalty development (trust, emotional bonding, advocacy, and repeat interaction) was assessed. Through a systematic process of comparison, coding, and refinement, patterns of interaction and recurring user responses were synthesized into a clear thematic framework.

**Table 2: Thematic Framework: Instagram Content Strategies and Their Impact on Customer Loyalty**

Theme	Sub-Theme (Content Type)	UGT Gratification Sought	Impact on Engagement	Impact on Customer Loyalty
<b>Informative Content</b>	Tutorials C How- Tos	Cognitive (Learning)	High engagement via saves, shares, and comments	Builds trust, positions brand as expert, strengthens loyalty
	Product Details C Ingredients	Cognitive (Information Seeking)	Helps followers make informed purchase decisions	Build transparency and credibility, reinforcing brand trust
<b>Entertaining Content</b>	Reels/Short	Entertainment (Amusement)	High view and share rates; encourages repeat visits	Emotional bonding with the brand increases brand recall
	Beauty Challenges/Trends	Entertainment C Social Utility	Drives UGC; sparks community participation	Creates a fun brand identity; boosts emotional connection

<b>Personalized Content</b>	User-Generated Content (UGC)	Social Integration C Belonging	Encourages likes, comments, and resharing by users	Promotes brand advocacy; customers feel valued and seen
	Influencer Collaboration	Parasocial Interaction	Strong engagement via trust transfer from influencers	Enhances brand authenticity and relational loyalty
<b>Interactive Content</b>	Polls, QCAs, Quizzes	Interactive Gratification	Immediate engagement (taps, replies); boosts story views	Builds two-way relationship; improves perceived brand attentiveness
	Giveaways Contests	Reward-Based Gratification	Spikes in engagement and new followers	Short-term loyalty can evolve into long-term loyalty with consistency

#### 4.1 Strategic Content Approaches in Instagram Organic Posts

This section analyses the content strategies adopted by beauty brands on Instagram and how to contribute to customer engagement and loyalty. Based on the thematic analysis, several key concepts were identified. Beauty brands use different types of organic content to enhance customer engagement and customer loyalty. It includes tutorials, product details, Influencer collaborations, giveaways, and UGC (Gomes & De Souza Lopes, 2022). Informative content builds trust by providing product information, entertaining content like reels, and short videos. Personalized content includes UGC and influencer collaborations, enhancing brand advocacy. Interactive posts such as polls, quizzes, and Q&As lead to communication. A combination of different content types helps sustain attention across various audience segments, promoting both informative and emotional engagement. The diversity in content allows brands to present themselves as trustworthy and approachable, which leads to customer loyalty within the beauty industry.

##### 4.1.1 Role of Interactive Features in Strengthening Customer Loyalty

Interactive features such as quizzes, polls, and Q&As create two-way communication between the brand and its audiences. This feature increases the participation. when customers feel heard and involved in content decisions, it strengthens the brand relationship. This engagement builds customer loyalty and makes customers more likely to remain connected with the brand. When customers give reviews or share their feedback, it creates a more engaged customer with the brand, which builds customer loyalty. This interactive content transforms brands from passive viewers to active brand participants, which is essential in building long-term loyalty.

##### 4.1.2 Emotional and Visual Elements in Enhancing Engagement

Emotional and visually appealing content, such as user testimonials, reels showcasing transformation journeys, and emotional content that shows messages generate high interaction, such as likes, shares, comments, and saves. Posts that share real-life stories, customer experiences, and founder messages can contribute to a brand's perceived transparency. Storytelling encourages engagement among customers, and they feel can relate to the brand. Influencer collaborations show the real usage of the product and the scenes of the brands. When influencers appear genuine, their credibility transfer to the brand, which builds authenticity among customers, which leads to customer loyalty. Thematic analysis highlights that high-quality imagery, visual consistency, and eye-catching content contribute to the aspirational appeal of beauty brands, which leads to an emotional connection (Enke & Borchers, 2019).

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Analyses through the Uses and Gratification Theory revealed that users engage with Instagram content to satisfy affective (to be entertained or emotionally moved), cognitive (to learn), social (to feel a sense of belonging), aesthetic (visual appeal), and reward-based (to win prizes and gain incentives). Each gratification appeals to contribute uniquely and appeals to a different segment of followers to their engagement behavior and customer loyalty (Tena-Monferrer et al., 2021). Each UGC content serves a unique function and is more appealing to the target audiences. When beauty brands create content that strategically builds more meaningful and personalized engagement. This enhances customer satisfaction, emotional bonds, and ultimately builds longer customer loyalty.

#### **4.1.5 Comparative Effectiveness of Content Types on User Engagement**

Emotional and interactive content types demonstrated the highest engagement metrics across Instagram formats. Influencer collaborations and user-generated content outperformed promotional posts well in terms of likes, comments, shares, and saves. Interactive content such as polls and Q&As, further boosted the engagement by directly involving users in brand-related discussions. This suggests that combining emotional and interactive content can offer the brand higher engagement and build long-term customer loyalty (Ashley & Tuten, 2014b).

#### **4.2.2 UGT Dimensions and Their Influence on Customer Loyalty**

Thematic coding analysis with UGT dimensions indicates that cognitive content (e.g., tutorials and product usage) contributes to authenticity and brand credibility, while social and emotional content (e.g., user features and storytelling) strengthens effective bonds. Reward-based content (giveaways and contests) is initiated with short-term loyalty. These findings underscore the importance of diversifying content strategies to fulfill various emotional and psychological needs, enhancing customer loyalty (Lombard, 2002).

#### **4.2.3 Content-Driven Engagement and Purchase Intent in the Beauty Industry**

The analysis revealed that information, entertainment, and authenticity directly impacts customer purchase intent. Emotional and informative content, such as customer testimonials, reviews, and after-purchase customer feedback, increases customers' confidence. High engagement (likes, shares, and comments) indicates that emotionally and informative content not only boosts engagement but also leads to conversion (Mayor & Bietti, 2025b). Content that adds meaning beyond product promotional plays a vital role in



shaping consumer decisions, building longer relationships, and stronger intent to make a purchase. The combination of entertaining, informative, and emotional content not only drives higher engagement but also directly increases purchase intent in the beauty industry. Brands that provide meaning, valuable content build deeper relationships with customers, leading to customer loyalty.

## **5 Conclusion**

Instagram has become a vital tool for digital marketing, especially in the beauty industry, as it allows brands to showcase their products through different types of content and influencer collaborations. Instagram content plays a significant role in driving customer engagement and customer loyalty. The insights provided by beauty brands and Uses and Gratification Theory create content that resonates with their target audiences, enhancing the marketing efforts and building a long-term relationship with the customers.

The findings showed that different types of Instagram content, such as entertaining, informative, and social types, significantly impact customer engagement and build customer loyalty. The strategic content planning is critical for beauty brands to retain customers (Ackermann et al., 2021b). The UGT framework explains that customers engage with brand content to meet their needs for information, entertainment, and social interaction. Motivational and entertaining posts led to higher engagement and stronger marketing outcomes (Jayasingh, 2019). The research highlighted that diverse content strategies are important for driving stronger customer relationships, and beauty brands should continue these strategies to enhance customer loyalty among their digital audiences.

### **5.1 Theoretical Implications**

This research demonstrates how different types of Instagram content affect customer engagement and foster loyalty in the beauty industry. It adds to the growing body of literature on social media marketing by applying UGT. The study also provides a detailed discussion of engagement, showing how emotional and cognitive gratifications lead to trust and build customer loyalty (Khan, 2016).

### **5.2 Practical Implications**

The study provides valuable insights for the beauty industry. It aims to build customer loyalty through Instagram. The Uses and Gratification Theory, such as information, emotional connection, social belonging, and beauty brands, can design the content that resonates with their target audiences. Instagram posts and reels that showcase the real customer experiences and brand story. It can strengthen customer trust and build customer loyalty (Hepola et al., 2020b). Interactive features like Q&As, polls, and quizzes create two-way communication that enhances the brand attractiveness. Similarly, UGT helps customers to feel valued, and it increases brand advocacy. Influencer collaboration, such as product usage and information, adds credibility to the brand and builds long-term relationships and customer loyalty. Different content types, such as visual and aesthetic content, play an essential role in capturing customer attention and brand identity. All these strategies highlight the importance of user-centric content for long-term customer loyalty.

### **5.3 Limitations and Future Research Scope**

The research offers valuable insights, but it also has certain limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the research focused only on Instagram and beauty brands, limiting the generalizability of the results to other social media platforms and industries. Further study extends the analysis to other sectors such as fashion, health, IT, and many others. Secondly, the research used content analysis without considering cultural background, professions, and demographics, which may influence the engagement patterns. Further research could explore these moderating factors, content types, and customer engagement. Finally, this research relied on Instagram posts and reels that were available publicly and their engagement metrics (such as likes, comments, and shares), which may not capture the full length of emotional engagement. Further research could combine content analysis with a questionnaire or interviews to gain deeper insights

Ng et al. (2020).

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**Ethics Declaration**

This research did not undergo an ethics review by the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) at Amity University Noida because it falls under the category of minimal risk, non-invasive, and non-interventional social science research. The study involved the collection of anonymous and non-sensitive survey responses from adult participants, without the use of personal identifiers or interventions. As per the guidelines followed by Amity University for such types of educational or behavioral research, formal IEC approval is not mandatory when informed consent is obtained, data confidentiality is maintained, and the research poses no risk to participants. Nevertheless, all ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, data anonymity, and informed consent, were strictly followed in accordance with the principles of ethical research practice outlined by the university.

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