

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Kasdi Merbah Ouargla University
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of Letters and English Language



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**Analyzing Multimodal Elements in User Generated
Content (UGC) Reels on Instagram and Their Impact
on Customers Persuasion: The Case of Cosmetic Adver-
tising**

Presented and publicly defended by

Bassmala Ammari

Supervised by

Dr. Saifeddine Guendouz

Jury

Dr. Azizi Afaf	Kasdi Merbah Ouargla	Chairperson
Dr. Seifeddine Guendouz	Kasdi Merbah Ouargla	Supervisor
Pr. Belarbi Ahmed Nourddine	Kasdi Merbah Ouargla	Examiner

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Dedication

To my beloved mother and father,

Whose sacrifices and endless love have been the foundation

of everything I am.

To my one and only sister **Salsabil**, and my brothers **Amine** and **Yahia**,

Who have walked beside me through every season of life.

And to my supervisor, **Dr Guendouz**

whose guidance, wisdom, and support have shaped this journey in ways words

can barely express

And to my youngest self

For her patience, her strength, and her quite courage in enduring what she did not

yet understand.

You made it. This is for you.

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1. Abstract

This study investigates the multimodal construction of persuasion in User-Generated Content (UGC) in short-form video Reels published on Instagram. Drawing on Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and Aristotle's rhetorical framework of ethos, pathos, and logos, this research examines how ordinary content creators strategically combine visual, verbal, and auditory modes to influence consumer attitudes and purchasing intentions in the beauty and skincare sector. A corpus of ten Instagram Reels, produced by unpaid users promoting skincare and beauty products, was selected and subjected to a multimodal rhetorical analysis. The findings reveal pathos is the dominant persuasive appeal strategy across the corpus. Contrastively, logos was the less implemented appeal strategy. Interestingly, the study further shows that the persuasive power of UGC Reels lies in the high degree of intermodal complementarity, whereby multiple semiotic modes work in synchronization to amplify a single rhetorical appeal.

Keywords: UGC, MDA, Aristotle rhetorical framework, Persuasion strategy, Instagram reels.

List of abbreviations

ADS: Advertisement

ASMR: Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response

ATH: Affect-Transfer Hypothesis

DA: Discourse Analysis

DAS: Discourse Analysis Studies

MDA: Multimodal Discourse Analysis

OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

SFV: Short Form Video

SM: Social Media

UGC: User Generated Content

WOM: word of mouth

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General introduction

Background of the study

Nowadays, social media has become an essential part of everyday life. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are widely used not only for entertainment, but also for advertising products and services. Many Brands and companies now rely on short video content, especially reels, to promote their products and reach a large audience. These videos often influence people's attitudes, opinions, and purchasing decisions, especially in the field of cosmetics where visual appearance plays an important role (Hu & Zhu, 2022).

Lately, User-Generated Content (UGC) has gained a strong attention in advertising. UGC reels usually show real people sharing their personal experiences with products. These videos include several multimodal elements such as facial expressions, tone of voice, body poses, background music, text on screen, and visual effects. Such elements can strengthen the message of the advertisement and make it more engaging and convincing. Therefore, analyzing these multimodal elements is important to understand how meaning and persuasion are constructed in cosmetic advertising on social media.

Statement of the problem

Although social media advertising has been widely studied, there is still limited research that focuses on UGC in cosmetic advertising from a discourse and multimodal perspective. Most previous studies examine persuasion from a marketing point of view, rather than analyzing how multimodal elements work together to construct persuasive meanings. This lack of linguistic and discourse-based analysis creates a gap that this study aims to address.

Aim of the Study

This research aims to analyze how multimodal elements are used in UGC reels related to cosmetic products and how these elements contribute to persuasion in social media advertising, particularly on Instagram. Moreover, it attempts to examine how these elements contribute to persuasive strategies, and explore how multimodality strengthens advertising messages.

Significance of the study

This research is significant because it contributes to the field of discourse analysis (DA) by focusing on multimodal communication in social media advertising. It helps understanding how language, visuals, and other semiotic modes intertwine to persuade an

audience. In addition, the study may be useful for content creators and marketers who long to improve the effectiveness of UGC advertising. It also adds to the limited research on cosmetic advertising within digital and social media contexts.

Research Questions

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are multimodal elements persuasive in cosmetic advertisements?
2. How are persuasive strategies constructed through multimodal elements in UGC reels?

Research Hypotheses

H1: Multimodal elements significantly enhance the persuasive impact of UGC cosmetic reels on Instagram.

H2: UGC cosmetic reels rely more on emotional appeal (pathos) than on logical appeal (logos) to persuade viewers.

Research methodology

1. Tools of data collection

This study adopts a mixed-method approach. That is to say, a qualitative approach supported by simple quantitative data from questionnaires. Data are comprised of 10 UGC reels selected from Instagram that promote cosmetic products. The videos are chosen based on popularity, clarity, and relevance to the study. In addition, a questionnaire will be handed out to 30 female participants, aged between 18-35 from the department of English language and literature, Ouargla, to explore their perceptions of persuasive elements in the videos. The reason behind this selection, is that female participants are more familiar with cosmetic products, and are more interested in Instagram reels featuring cosmetic advertising.

2. Procedures of data analysis

The selected videos will be analyzed using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) to identify visual, verbal, and auditory elements. The persuasive strategies "ethos, pathos, and logos" by Aristotle, will be implemented to examine these elements. Moreover, the

questionnaire results will be analyzed statistically using percentages and tables to support the qualitative findings.

3. Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical frameworks are implemented to analyze the collected data. The first one is MDA, which focuses on how different modes such as language, images, gestures, and sound interact to create meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). This framework is suitable for analyzing video content because reels rely on multiple modes of communication.

The second framework is Aristotle's model of persuasion, which includes ethos, pathos, and logos. To begin with, ethos refers to credibility and trustworthiness to win over an audience. On the other hand, pathos relates to persuading an audience by appealing to their emotions, values, and beliefs rather than logic. Lastly, logos focuses on logic and reasoning, using evidence like data, facts, statistics, and expert testimony to construct a rational argument (Aristotle, 2007).

8. Ethical Considerations

All videos used in the study are publicly available. No copyrights will be breached. That is to say, owners of the video's copyrights will be emailed and notified that their videos will be used in this research for educational purposes. As for the questionnaire, participants' identities will be anonymous, and all answers will be kept confidential.

9. Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledges several limitations that may affect the scope and generalizability of its findings.

First, the sample size is relatively small, as the analysis is restricted to only 10 UGC reels selected from Instagram. While this number allows for in-depth qualitative analysis, it may not be fully representative of the wide variety of cosmetic advertising content available on the platform. Second, the questionnaire is administered exclusively to 30 female participants from the Department of English Language and Literature at Ouargla University. This limited and homogeneous sample may not reflect the perceptions of a broader or more diverse audience, which restricts the generalizability of the quantitative findings. Third, the study is confined to Instagram as a single social media platform. Other platforms such as TikTok or YouTube, which also host a significant amount of

UGC cosmetic content, are not considered, which may limit the comprehensiveness of the findings. Fourth, the selection of videos based on popularity, clarity, and relevance, although justified, involves a degree of subjectivity. Different researchers might select different reels, which could lead to varying results. Fifth, multimodal discourse analysis, by its nature, involves interpretive judgment. The identification and classification of multimodal elements such as gestures, tone of voice, or visual effects may vary from one analyst to another, which may affect the consistency of the analysis. Finally, the study focuses solely on female participants, as they were considered more familiar with cosmetic products. This gender-specific sampling means that male perspectives on cosmetic advertising persuasion are entirely excluded.

CHAPTER One: THEORETICAL PART

1. Digital Communication and User-Generated Content: A Linguistic Perspective

The transformation of digital communication over the past decade has been driven by two main developments: the increase of User-Generated Content (UGC) and the rise of short-form video platforms (Ruzic & Biloz, 2010). These changes have reshaped how individuals create, share, and interpret meaning online, which has attracted more research on the ways people communicate in these spaces. This section looks at previous studies on UGC and short videos. It first explains what they are and how they are different from traditional advertising. Then, it shows how they help build trust and influence viewers (Manic, 2024).

1.1. Definition of UGC

UGC is considered one of the most authentic tools in contemporary digital communication, as it operates at the intersection between consumers and brands. It plays a crucial role in the economic field by contributing to key marketing objectives, particularly the development of trust and credibility among audiences. This explains why many brands increasingly rely on UGC as part of their strategic communication and promotional efforts.

UGC refers to any form of content created and shared online by individuals without direct financial compensation. Furthermore, for content to be classified as UGC, it must be publicly accessible, demonstrate a certain level of creative effort, and be produced outside of professional or commercial contexts (OECD, 2007, p. 9).

This definition highlights special value of UGC, as its non-commercial and user-driven nature enhances its perceived authenticity. As a result, audiences tend to view such content as more trustworthy and relatable compared to traditional advertising. Consequently, UGC strengthens the relationship between brands and consumers, while

also influencing purchasing decisions and increasing engagement in digital environments (Naeem & Okafor, 2019).

1.2. The Communicative Power of Short-Form Video Reels

Short-form videos now shape communication with the rise of social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, which have experienced a significant growth in consumer attention. Especially, features such as “Reels” represent one of the most widely used tools for capturing audience interest. This trend can be explained by the modern context, often described as an age of rapidity, where consumers prefer fast, engaging, and visually appealing content. As a result, short-form videos have emerged as an effective medium for communication and interaction (Haenlein et al., 2020; Wahid et al., 2023).

Furthermore, brands and companies have adapted to this shift by integrating short-form video content into their marketing strategies. The use of social media, especially UGC, allows businesses to expand their reach and align more closely with consumer preferences. This approach not only enhances brand visibility but also contributes to business growth and investment returns (Romero-Rodríguez & Castillo-Abdul, 2023).

As noted by Malik et al. (2025), “These platforms accelerate the creation and consumption of content. To meet the evolving preferences of audiences who are digital natives and who place a higher value on intimacy and visual storytelling, these platforms accelerate the creation and consumption of content” (p. 1). That is to say, digital platforms clearly foster more interactive and engaging environment, benefiting both consumers and companies by facilitating communication and content exchange.

1.3. UGC vs Traditional advertising

UGC is an effective means of building consumer trust and credibility, in contrast to traditional advertising, which primarily focuses on capturing attention. While each marketing strategy has its own impact, contemporary marketing is progressively shaped by

Word-of-Mouth Communication (WOM) and the preferences of a new generation that actively seeks innovative technologies and interactive tools to satisfy its needs (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Huete-Alcocer, 2017).

In this context, many brands now prioritize UGC strategies over traditional advertising, as they observe tangible growth in their performance, particularly in terms of sales and audience engagement. This shift also reflects consumer behavior, as individuals tend to follow and trust content that appears successful, authentic, and widely accepted by others.

Mohamed (2025), argues that traditional marketing follows a top-down approach in which brands control the message, whereas UGC represents a bottom-up dynamic where consumers actively shape the brand's image. In addition, he emphasizes that consumers often ignore traditional advertisements because they perceive them as overly promotional. In contrast, content created by ordinary users appears more genuine and relatable, which increases its credibility and influence. In other words, people today prefer to listen to other consumers rather than brands themselves. UGC feel more real, which makes it easier for audiences to trust it and engage with it. This is why it is becoming more powerful than traditional advertising.

1.4. The Social Foundations of UGC Credibility

Web 2.0 has significantly transformed the nature of the internet by shifting users from passive viewers to active creators and participants. It has reduced the distance between individuals by providing interactive tools and features that enable users to share content, comment, and engage with others easily. As a result, this transformation has facilitated the emergence and growth of UGC. This development has been highly beneficial for companies, brands, and marketing professionals, as it supports the enhancement of sales performance and strengthens consumer trust (Naeem & Okafor, 2019).

In this context, Naeem and Okafor (2019) explain that consumers tend to trust UGC more than traditional advertising or celebrity endorsements due to the perceived authenticity of its creators. Since such content is typically unpaid, it is considered more genuine and reflective of real experiences, unlike professional marketing, which may appear scripted. Consequently, UGC is perceived as more understandable and trustworthy because it is based on users' personal experiences. This social foundation of validity allows ordinary individuals to share information that appears more honest and objective to modern consumers. That is to say, people today believe content that comes from people like them. When they see real experiences instead of polished advertisements, they feel more confident and comfortable trusting the brand.

2. Discourse Analysis (MDA)

2.1. Defining Multimodality and MDA

MDA is based on the idea that meaning is created through the combination of multiple modes working together. As **Riyandi (2022)** states, drawing on Lim's perspective, human communication is inherently multimodal, as individuals naturally and often unconsciously use different semiotic resources to construct meaning. In this sense, multimodality refers to combining various modes such as language, images, color, typography, and layout within a single communicative event, allowing audiences to interpret meaning beyond written or spoken text.

Riyandi (2022) expands this view, by believing that multimodality also involves the interaction and coordination of different semiotic systems to produce context-specific meanings (Van Leeuwen, 2005; Baldry & Thibault, 2006, as cited in Liu et al., 2024). Therefore, it is not only about the presence of multiple modes together but also about how these modes function within a particular context.

The field of Multimodal Discourse Studies (MDS) has developed over the past two decades. Liu et al. (2024) point out that research in this area has increased considerably, reflecting theoretical development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the exploration of new research topics across fields such as linguistics, communication, education, sociology, and computer science.

This expansion indicates a growing recognition that communication is fundamentally multimodal. Moreover, MDA has been combined with critical approaches, such as Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), which examines how different semiotic resources contribute to the construction of meaning and the reinforcement or challenge of power relations in society (Liu et al., 2024). Overall, MDA is now considered a well-established field that focuses on analysing how multiple modes interact within social and cultural contexts.

2.2. Modes of Communication: Visual, Verbal, and Auditory

In MDA, a mode is defined as a socially and culturally shaped resource used to create meaning. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, as cited in Girón-García, 2024), modes are organized systems of communication that follow specific conventions, while Kress (2010, as cited in Girón-García, 2024) suggests that any resource capable of conveying meaning can be considered a mode. This definition includes both linguistic and non-linguistic elements, as well as visual and auditory forms of communication. Similarly, Riyandi (2022) emphasizes that multimodality includes visual elements such as images, color, typography, and layout, which function together as part of a complete communicative system.

A useful distinction in Multimodal Analysis (MA) is between embodied and filmic modes. Embodied modes refer to the use of the human body (body language), including speech, tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, gaze, and spatial positioning. In contrast, filmic modes

relate to technical aspects of video production, such as camera angles, editing, music, sound effects, and visual composition (Girón-García, 2024).

These modes do not function independently; rather, they interact to form multimodal ensembles that shape meaning in communication. Understanding how these modes combine is essential for analysing how meaning is formed in real-life interactions. Additionally, Liu et al. (2024) show that interpreting multimodal elements often depends on shared knowledge between the creator and the audience, which adds complexity to the analysis.

2.3. Multimodality in Digital Video Content

Digital video content, particularly Instagram videos such as reels and stories, provides a rich context for multimodal analysis. Such videos combine verbal and visual elements and can be categorized into different types, including presentation videos, expert explanations, animations, and narrative content (as cited in Girón-García, 2024). For example, animation videos rely heavily on filmic modes like editing, music, sound effects, and visual prompts to convey information effectively. These elements may serve structural purposes, such as organizing content, or functional purposes, like emphasizing key ideas. Within the visual grammar of Reels, the concept of modal density serves as a primary driver of audience engagement.

As defined by Norris (2004) and further applied to digital video by Adami (2014), modal density refers to the degree to which various semiotic resources such as overlay text, rhythmic editing, and embodied gestures work in synchronization to construct a unified message. In the context of UGC, this density is achieved through intermodal complementarity, where the meaning of the spoken word is not merely repeated but is amplified by the visual and auditory modes.

For example, the precise timing of on-screen text transitions to a musical beat, combined with the creator's deictic gestures (pointing), creates a high-intensity communicative event.

This multi-layered structure is essential in the current "age of rapidity," as it allows the viewer to process complex information quickly while maintaining the perceived authenticity and intimacy of the creator-consumer relationship. (Norris, 2004).

The analysis of Instagram reels requires attention to both embodied and filmic modes. Girón-García (2024) shows that elements such as voice, tone, pauses, and intonation work together with visual and technical features like images, colors, and sound effects to enhance understanding. The relationship between visuals and narration is particularly important, as it helps simplify complex information and maintain audience engagement.

3. The Rhetorical Triangle: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in Persuasive Communication

The Aristotelian framework of persuasion continues to hold sway as a key model for understanding how language can influence people in many different communication situations. Aristotle's rhetorical triangle ethos, pathos, and logos offer a systematic way to analyze the methods by which messages can persuade audiences. As Talaue (2022) explains, "Aristotle identified three methods in which people can be persuaded: ethos - an appeal based on credibility; pathos - an appeal based on emotions; and logos - an appeal based on logic" (p. 1).

These three modes of persuasion continue to inform research and practice across multiple domains, including advertising, digital communication, and job interviews. By combining linguistic, psychological, and neuroscientific perspectives, scholars have examined not only what each appeal is but also how it functions in shaping audience responses. (Talaue, 2022).

3.1. Ethos: The Appeal to Credibility and Trust

Ethos is the persuasive appeal that depends on the speaker's character and how trustworthy the audience finds them. This is a key way that audiences come to accept a message. According to Krishnan et al. (2021), ethos shows the speaker's consistency and comes through in the speaker's personality. For persuasion to work, the speaker must gain the listeners' approval. This means that success with ethos is not just about what is said, but about the speaker themselves. In advertising, companies use this appeal by including trustworthy sources.f

For example, an advertisement using ethos tries to convince consumers that the company is honest and reliable, so they should buy the product. This often involves sharing statistics from respected experts, such as when a large number of dentists agree that one toothpaste brand is better than others (Talaue, 2022).

To enhance this belief, Talaue's (2022) study of Saudi Arabian college students and their reactions to advertisements found that more than half of the respondents believed ethos was the most effective type of persuasion. The researcher suggested that this result may be linked to cultural values, since Saudis generally prefer to do business with people they already know and trust (Talaue, 2022). This cultural aspect of ethos shows how important it is to understand the audience in persuasive communication, because the strength of credibility appeals may change depending on the social and cultural setting.

3.2. Pathos: The Appeal to Emotion

Pathos is the persuasive appeal that works by creating emotional reactions in the audience, making them more open to the message. As Talaue (2022) explains, an advertisement that uses pathos tries to cause an emotional response in the consumer. Sometimes this is a positive feeling, such as happiness, for example showing people enjoying a Pepsi drink. Other times,

advertisers use negative feelings, like pain, for instance showing a person having back problems after buying the wrong mattress.

This ability to create both positive and negative emotions show how flexible pathos is as a persuasion strategy. It can create either approach-based motivation, where people want to move toward something, or avoidance-based motivation, where people want to move away from something, depending on what the communicator wants to achieve. (Talaue,2022).

Using emotional appeals effectively requires careful attention to the audience's mindset. Krishnan et al., (2021) indicate that when building a pathos appeal, speakers should consider the listener's feelings, desires, and strongly held beliefs about themselves. Researchers have also identified several pathos strategies, including humor, personal stories, descriptive language, and positive memories.

This focus on understanding the audience fits with the general principle that good persuasion requires adapting to the specific psychological traits of the target audience. In advertising, the strong presence of emotional appeals has been observed across many cultural settings.

Hussain and Zaffer (2023) note that emotional connection in any advertisement is a key feature that makes it interesting to the public. Because of this, people are much more likely to remember an emotional advertisement even if they have seen it only once.

3.3. Logos: The Appeal to Logic and Reason

Logos is the persuasive appeal that depends on the structure, clarity, and factual basis of the message to convince audiences through rational thinking. As Talaue (2022) explains, an advertisement using logos provides consumers with the evidence and statistics they need to fully understand what a product does. This appeal presents the straight facts about a product,

such as stating that one glass of Florida orange juice contains a large portion of the daily vitamin C a person needs.

This type of appeal assumes that the audience is able and willing to process information in a careful, step-by-step way, judging claims based on how logical they are and how well they are supported by facts. The understanding of logos goes beyond simply listing facts. It also includes the broader argument structure of the discourse.

Krishnan et al., (2021) define logos as developing a proper argument with clear construction and reliability, which is achieved by giving accurate information and focusing on sound reasoning. This definition highlights that effective logical persuasion requires not only correct facts but also the organized and clear presentation of those facts. processing logical appeals places significant demands on the audience's thinking skills, as they must judge whether the conclusions drawn are valid and whether the evidence actually supports the claims being made.

3.4. Comparing the Effectiveness of Different Appeals

Emotional appeals often dominate attention and influence, supporting the Affect-Transfer Hypothesis (ATH), which posits that individuals' attitudes toward a brand are shaped by the emotional reactions elicited by an advertisement (Hussain et al., 2023). Ethos and logos complement these emotional effects by providing trust and factual justification, resulting in persuasive messages that are both memorable and credible.

In digital and social media contexts, these principles remain highly relevant. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) allow users to craft messages that strategically incorporate ethos, pathos, and logos, with attention to audience expectations, creativity, and linguistic style (Saaty, 2020; Mshvenieradze, 2013) The dynamic and interactive nature of online communi-

cation encourages flexible use of these appeals, highlighting the continued applicability of Aristotle's model in contemporary discourse.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed three interconnected bodies of literature. First, research on UGC and Short form videos (SFV) platforms (e.g. Instagram Reels, TikTok) demonstrates that UGC is perceived as more authentic and trustworthy than traditional advertising because it originates from ordinary users rather than brands (OECD, 2007; Mohamed, 2025). SFV, in particular, have become dominant in the current "age of rapidity" due to their ability to capture attention quickly and foster intimate, visually driven communication (Malik et al., 2025).

Second, MDA provides a framework for understanding how meaning is constructed through the integration of visual, verbal, and auditory modes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Riyandi, 2022). In digital video content, modal density and intermodal complementarity e.g., the synchronization of on-screen text, gestures, music, and editing create high-intensity communicative events that engage viewers and convey complex information efficiently (Norris, 2004; Adami, 2014).

Third, Aristotle's rhetorical triangle (ethos, pathos, logos) remains a powerful model for analysing persuasion. Ethos builds credibility through trustworthiness, pathos engages emotions, and logos appeals to logic. Effective persuasion in digital contexts typically combines all three appeals (Krishnan et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2023).

However, a clear gap exists across these three strands of literature. While UGC and SFV are acknowledged as persuasive and multimodal, few studies have systematically analysed how the specific multimodal features of UGC Reels (e.g., overlay text timing, gesture, sound

effects, pacing) operationalize ethos, pathos, and logos. Existing MDA studies often focus on educational or YouTube content (Girón-García, 2024; Riyandi, 2022), and rhetorical analyses of digital media rarely integrate a fine-grained multimodal lens. Moreover, the interplay between modal density and each rhetorical appeal for instance, whether high modal density enhances emotional appeal (pathos) or undermines credibility (ethos) remains unexplored.

The present study addresses this gap. By combining MDA with the Aristotelian framework, this research will examine how UGC short-form video Reels employ visual, verbal, and auditory modes to construct ethos, pathos, and logos in persuasive communication. The following chapter details the methodological approach, including the corpus selection criteria, the MDA coding scheme, and the procedure for analysing rhetorical strategies across a sample of Instagram Reels.

CHAPTER TWO: PRACTICAL PART

II.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of ten UGC cosmetic reels selected from Instagram, followed by the results and discussion of the questionnaire administered to 30 female participants. Each reel is analyzed using Aristotle's rhetorical framework of ethos, pathos, and logos, and examined through the lens of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) to identify how visual, verbal, and auditory modes work together to construct persuasive meanings.

Section One: Analysis of UGC Videos

1. Video Analysis 1

Table 1 Rhetorical and multimodal analysis of UserA's Skincare routine reel

User A Duration: 0 :21s	
Ethos	The woman shows her face while performing her skincare routine, which means authenticity and real usage of the product. Her neutral expression with a slight smile suggests naturalness rather than exaggerated performance.
Pathos	The surprised facial expression at the beginning acts as a hook to capture attention. Upbeat background music creates an energetic and positive mood. Sound effects such as the cream being squeezed and sparkles when she shows her face enhance sensory engagement and create a feeling of satisfaction and glow.
Logos	Product names (GIM PDRN Hydro Firming Cream, Bouncy Ampule, Boosting Glow Toner Pad) and text features ("Radiant Glow vs Dewy Glow") are displayed on screen. These provide factual information about the product identity and options available, though no prices or ingredient details are shown.

Multimodal Elements	Visual mode: the creator's face, neutral smile, on-screen product text, and sparkle effects. Auditory mode: upbeat background music and sensory sound effects (cream squeezing). Verbal mode: written text overlays showing product names and categories ("Radiant Glow vs Dewy Glow").
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Discussion of table 01

In Reel 1, pathos is the dominant persuasive appeal, created through upbeat music, sparkle sound effects, and the woman's surprised expression which serves as an engaging hook. Ethos is moderately established by showing her real face during the skincare routine, suggesting authenticity and honest reviewing. Logos is the weakest appeal, as only product names are displayed without prices, ingredients, or scientific evidence.

Overall, the reel persuades viewers primarily through emotional and sensory elements rather than logical arguments. From a multimodal perspective, the auditory mode (upbeat music and sound effects) and the visual mode (facial expressions and sparkle visuals) work together to construct pathos as the dominant appeal, while the verbal mode (on-screen product text) provides only a weak contribution to logos. This reel exhibits high modal density, as the auditory mode (upbeat music and sensory sound effects), the visual mode (facial expressions and sparkle effects), and the verbal mode (on-screen product text) operate simultaneously. These modes display intermodal complementarity, as each reinforces the dominant pathos appeal from a different sensory channel rather than providing independent or contradictory meanings.

2. Video Analysis 2

Table 2 Rhetorical and Multimodal analysis of User B's 7-Day transformation reel

User B Duration: 0 :40s	
Ethos	Before/after photos showing real skin transformation over 7 days. The woman shows her real results honestly.
Pathos	Relaxing background music with woman speaking in a calm, gentle voice, applying cream on her face, showing the smooth texture, and expressing personal excitement (I didn't expect to see results this quickly).
Logos	"Day 1 → Day 7" (time frame) displayed on screen, providing a structured visual timeline of the product's effectiveness.
Multimodal Elements	Visual mode: before/after photos of real skin transformation, cream texture demonstration on face. Auditory mode: relaxing background music, calm and gentle speaking voice. Verbal mode: spoken personal testimony (I didn't expect results this quickly), on-screen text showing "Day 1 → Day 7" timeline.

Discussion of table 02

In Reel 2, pathos is the dominant persuasive appeal, created through relaxing background music, the woman's calm and personal tone of voice, and her demonstration of the cream's smooth texture on her skin. Ethos is strongly established through before/after photos showing her real skin transformation over seven days, which signals honesty and authentic results. Logos is minimal, with only the "Day 1 – Day 7" timeline appearing on screen, while no prices, sizes, or ingredient lists are visually provided. Overall, the reel relies primarily on pathos and ethos, with logos playing a very weak role. Multimodally, the visual mode (before/after photos) constructs ethos through visible proof, while the auditory mode (calm music and gentle voice) reinforces pathos

through emotional atmosphere, showing how the two modes collaborate to build a convincing and trustworthy message.

3. Video Analysis 3

Table 3 Rhetorical and multimodal analysis of User C's professional endorsement and serum application

User C Duration: 0 :33s	
Ethos	The creator establishes credibility through high-quality visual "Before and After" proof and by citing the endorsement of professional Korean makeup artists. Her personal testimony of using the product "for a while now" further strengthens her authority as an experienced user.
Pathos	The video appeals to the viewer's emotions by highlighting common skin insecurities ("rough texture") and offering the "secret" to a "flawless" and "bouncy" result. The gentle, ASMR-style audio and soft lighting evoke a sense of calm and self-care.
Logos	Logic is applied by demonstrating the serum's specific application process and describing its physical properties: "not too heavy, not too light". The creator explains the product's functional benefits for seasonal skin changes and makeup preparation.
Multimodal Elements	Visual mode: high-quality before/after visuals, soft lighting, close-up of serum application on skin. Auditory mode: ASMR-style gentle audio creating a calm atmosphere. Verbal mode: spoken product description ("not too heavy, not too light"), reference to professional Korean makeup artists as external authority.

Discussion of table 03

In this reel, ethos is constructed through high-quality before-and-after visuals and the creator's reference to professional Korean makeup artists, which positions her as

a credible and experienced user. Pathos appeals to viewers' emotions by addressing common skin insecurities such as rough texture, while the gentle ASMR-style audio and soft lighting evoke a sense of calm and self-care. Logos appears through the demonstration of the serum's application process and the description of its physical properties ("not too heavy, not too light"), providing logical reasoning for its effectiveness. Overall, the reel balances all three appeals, with pathos and ethos working together to build emotional connection and trust, while logos supports the product's functional value. Multimodally, the ASMR auditory mode works alongside the soft visual lighting and high-quality before/after images to create a unified atmosphere of calm and trust, while the verbal mode reinforces logos through factual product description, demonstrating how all three modes function together to serve all three rhetorical appeals simultaneously. This reel achieves strong multimodal integration: the ASMR auditory mode, the soft visual lighting, and the verbal reference to professional Korean makeup artists each contribute to a different rhetorical appeal — ethos, pathos, and logos respectively — yet the three modes are tightly coordinated so that the overall message is experienced as unified rather than fragmented, illustrating how high modal density combined with tight integration produces a reel in which all three appeals operate simultaneously without competing.

4. Video Analysis 4

Table 4 Rhetorical and multimodal analysis of User D's " Get Ready with Me" (GRWM)

User D Duration: 0 :23s	
Ethos	Credibility is established through the display of a complete product line from a recognizable brand and the speaker's skilled application of the products. The "GRWM" format suggests the speaker is a regular user of the brand, enhancing

Pathos	the authenticity of the demonstration.
	The video uses upbeat, trendy background music and fast editing style to create a positive and energetic mood. The visual transition from a natural state to a "glowy" finished look appeals to the viewer's desire for an easy, effective beauty routine.
	Logic is provided through clear on-screen text identifying each product and its specific function (e.g., "Hydration Mist," "Plumping Moisturizer"). The step-by-step visual sequence demonstrates exactly how the products work together to achieve the final result.
Multimodal Elements	Visual mode: fast-paced editing, visual transition from natural to luminous look, product display in a real-life setting. Auditory mode: upbeat trendy background music reinforcing energy and excitement. Verbal mode: on-screen text labels identifying each product and its function ("Hydration Mist," "Plumping Moisturizer").

Discussion of table 04

In this reel, ethos is communicated through the "aesthetic" presentation of the products, aligning the content with modern beauty standards, and through showing the products in a real-life GRWM setting. Pathos is driven by the sensory appeal of the routine — the misting of the skin and the application of the cream — which emphasizes the "self-care" experience. This is reinforced by logos, as the text overlays provide the factual information necessary for a viewer to understand what is being used without needing a long explanation.

From a multimodal standpoint, the fast-paced visual editing and trendy auditory background construct pathos through energy and desire, while the verbal mode — through clear on-screen product labels — provides the logical grounding, demonstrating how visual, auditory, and verbal modes divide persuasive functions between them. This reel illustrates a clear modal division of labour: the auditory mode (upbeat trendy music) constructs pathos through energy and mood, while the verbal mode (on-screen product labels) provides the logical grounding of logos, and the visual mode (the transformation from a natural to a finished look) supports both simultaneously. This distribution of rhetorical functions across distinct modes represents a form of intermodal complementarity specific to the GRWM format, in which each mode is assigned a primary persuasive task.

5. Video Analysis 5

Table 5 Rhetorical and multimodal analysis of user E's PR haul and mini-product logic

User E Duration: 0:18s	
Ethos	Credibility here is through the display of a "PR haul" from a reputable brand. The speaker's excitement and the hands-on demonstration of multiple products showcase an authentic user experience, positioning the content as a trusted recommendation rather than a formal advertisement.
Pathos	The video emphasizes joy and surprise, using phrases like "jump like a little kid" and "thoughtful surprise." This emotional appeal taps into the viewer's desire for happiness, gifting, and the "treat yourself" culture, made more relatable through the cozy, festive setting.

Logos	Logic is presented by the practical benefits of "mini" products: they allow for testing "without waste," "without pressure," and are "perfect for travel." The rapid visual sequence of various items — serums, masks, and lip balms — provides a logical overview of the variety and value included in the collection.
Multimodal Elements	Visual mode: rapid visual sequence of multiple products (serums, masks, lip balms), cozy festive setting reinforcing the "gift" atmosphere. Auditory mode: energetic upbeat background music enhancing the excitement. Verbal mode: emotional spoken language ("jump like a little kid," "thoughtful surprise") combined with logical spoken reasoning ("without waste," "perfect for travel").

Discussion of table 05

This reel is a notable illustration of how pathos works in social media. The creator employs childlike enthusiasm describing the experience as "jumping like a little kid» to construct an emotional atmosphere of joy and spontaneity that invites viewer identification. In the beauty world, how a product makes you feel is often just as important as what it does. Ethos comes from seeing so many different products at once, making the brand look professional and generous. Logos is simple but effective — the creator explains that small "mini" products are a smart way to try new things without wasting money. Multimodally, the verbal mode carries both emotional language and logical reasoning at the same time, while the visual mode supports both through the rapid product display and cozy setting, showing how a single reel can use the same modes to serve multiple rhetorical functions simultaneously. Notably, this reel demonstrates multimodal convergence in the verbal mode itself: unlike most reels in this corpus where the verbal mode primarily serves either pathos or logos, the creator's spoken commentary here

carries emotional language ("jump like a little kid") and logical reasoning ("without waste," "perfect for travel") within a single mode, while the visual rapid product display and the cozy auditory atmosphere support both functions simultaneously, resulting in an unusually high degree of modal density for an 18-second reel.

6. Video Analysis 6

Table 6 Rhetorical and multimodal analysis of user F's aesthetic unboxing experience

User F Duration: 0:10s	
Ethos	The creator does not show expertise or talk about professional results. The credibility is only surface-level because she is showing a real product from a known brand.
Pathos	The reel deploys soft lighting and a warm aesthetic atmosphere to evoke a sense of calm and comfort in the viewer. The visual styling frames the products as an accessible everyday indulgence, appealing to aspirational consumer desires.
Logos	There is no logical information provided. No prices, no ingredients, and no explanation of what the products do. It is a purely visual demonstration of unboxing.
Multimodal Elements	Visual mode: soft lighting, aesthetic product unboxing, cozy setting — the primary and dominant mode in this reel. Auditory mode: soft background audio creating a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. Verbal mode: almost completely absent; no spoken commentary, no on-screen text explaining the products.

Discussion of table 06

In this reel, pathos is clearly the most effective and dominant appeal. Since the creator provides very little logical information and relies on surface-level credibility by simply featuring a famous brand, the persuasiveness comes almost entirely from the feeling of the reel. This reel illustrates how the visual and auditory modes alone with no verbal support can construct pathos effectively through aesthetic appeal and soft atmosphere, confirming that multimodal persuasion does not always require language to be successful. From a multimodal perspective, this reel is significant precisely because of its modal absence: the near-complete absence of the verbal mode — no spoken commentary, no on-screen text — forces all persuasive work onto the visual and auditory

modes alone. This confirms a key MDA principle: persuasion does not require language; when the visual and auditory modes are sufficiently coordinated, they can construct pathos through aesthetic atmosphere without any verbal contribution, demonstrating that modal reduction can itself be a strategic multimodal choice.

7. Video Analysis 7

Table 7 Rhetorical and multimodal analysis of user G's relatable skin irritation Disclosure

User G Duration: 0:30s	
Ethos	The creator builds trust by sharing her real skin and its irritation during her period. Her use of the product herself, and positioning herself as an authentic user, strengthens her credibility.
Pathos	This appeal is very strong; she focuses on a common pain (irritated skin) and offers the product as a solution. The style of this video gives the vibe of a self-care mood, making the viewer associate the product with a moment of peace.
Logos	The logic is provided through the explanation of how to use the pads (as a mask for 5 minutes), and then shows the final hydration on her face. Showing and mentioning the brand name and the visual evidence of the product's texture provide a reasonable justification for its effectiveness.
Multimodal Elements	Visual mode: real skin showing irritation, product texture close-up, final hydrated result on face. Auditory mode: calm self-care style background audio reinforcing the mood of peace and comfort. Verbal mode: spoken personal disclosure ("irritated skin during my period"), step-by-step usage instructions ("use as a mask for 5 minutes").

Discussion of table 07

This reel shows that ethos and pathos work together to create a highly persuasive recommendation. By mentioning her period, the creator uses a very specific emotional hook that also builds trust this is a powerful combination because it makes the viewer feel understood. The ethos here is about being honest; the persuasiveness comes from

the creator's willingness to be real with the camera. Logos is present through the instructions but plays a supporting role.

Multimodally, the verbal mode (personal spoken disclosure) and the visual mode (real skin and product texture) work together to construct both ethos and pathos simultaneously, while the auditory mode reinforces the self-care atmosphere, demonstrating how modes can overlap in their rhetorical functions rather than each serving only a single appeal. This reel illustrates modal overlap: unlike reels where each mode serves a single rhetorical appeal, the verbal mode (spoken personal disclosure) and the visual mode (real skin and product texture close-up) both construct ethos and pathos simultaneously, with neither mode dedicated exclusively to one appeal. The auditory mode (calm self-care background audio) then reinforces pathos independently, producing a multimodal configuration in which the modes overlap rather than divide their persuasive functions — a pattern consistent with MDA accounts of how personal testimony reels achieve authenticity.

8. Video Analysis 8

Table 8 Rhetorical and multimodal analysis of User H's Ingredient-focused Hair contrast

User H Duration: 0:15s	
Ethos	The creator's credibility is marked through visual proof and brand association. By showing her own hair, she acts as proof. The creator does not need to explain her expertise because the visible results on her hair speak for themselves.
Pathos	The "Before" and "After" contrast creates a sense of satisfaction and hope. The slow-motion hair flips and the trendy music produce a feeling of "main character energy" and glamour. The slow-motion hair flip evokes a sense of glamour and self-confidence, positioning the viewer as the aspirational subject of the transformation narrative.
Logos	The creator shows the specific percentages of ingredients (2% and 11% complexes) on the packaging, giving a valid reason for the hair's shine. The step-by-step explanation showing the product's texture and how it is applied in the shower provides a logical "how-to" that convinces the viewer of the product's functional

	ease.
Multimodal Elements	Visual mode: before/after hair contrast, slow-motion hair flip, close-up of product label showing ingredient percentages — serving both pathos and logos. Auditory mode: trendy background music sustaining emotional engagement throughout. Verbal mode: on-screen text highlighting "2% and 11% complexes," step-by-step application instructions.

Discussion of table 08

In this UGC video, pathos and logos are balanced to create a high level of persuasiveness. The major factor is pathos, as the visual transformation of dull hair to glossy hair causes an immediate emotional "want" in the audience. However, logos builds through the close-ups of the product labels mentioning specific ingredient percentages, giving the viewer a rational reason to follow their feelings.

From a multimodal perspective, the visual mode serves a dual function — constructing pathos through the slow-motion transformation and logos through the ingredient percentage close-ups — while the auditory mode sustains emotional engagement throughout, showing how a single mode can carry more than one rhetorical appeal at the same time. This reel demonstrates modal multifunctionality in the visual mode: the slow-motion hair flip constructs pathos through glamour and emotional desire, while the close-up of the product label showing specific ingredient percentages constructs logos through factual evidence — yet both are delivered through the same visual mode, without any shift in auditory or verbal resources. This is a notable example of how a single mode can carry more than one rhetorical appeal simultaneously, contributing to the reel's high modal density despite its short duration.

9. Video Analysis 9

Table 9 Rhetorical and multimodal analysis of User I's " Best friend vibe " car application

User I Duration: 0 :36s	
Ethos	The creator constructs a peer-like persona — what viewers commonly describe as a "best friend vibe" — by filming in a casual, unfiltered setting, which enhances her perceived authenticity and relatability.
Pathos	The excitement and positive energy in the video make this appeal extremely strong. Her bright smile, the upbeat background music, and her happiness when applying the lip oil target the viewer's desire to feel pretty, fresh, and trendy.
Logos	The logic is built on real-time demonstration rather than scientific data. She applies the products on camera and explains how they feel, addressing practical consumer concerns.
Multimodal Elements	Visual mode: natural lighting, real-time application of blush and lip oil on camera, bright and natural facial expressions filmed in a casual car setting. Auditory mode: upbeat background music reinforcing the positive and trendy atmosphere. Verbal mode: spoken real-time commentary addressing practical concerns ("feels smooth without being sticky").

Discussion of table 09

The video becomes persuasive mainly through emotion and presentation. The creator's friendly and enthusiastic style creates an enjoyable and attractive atmosphere for viewers. At the same time, logos appears through the visual demonstration of the products — she applies the blush and lip oil on camera in natural lighting, allowing viewers to clearly see the results. When she mentions that the lip oil feels smooth without being sticky, she addresses a common consumer concern, which adds a logical reason to trust the product. Multimodally, the auditory mode (upbeat music) and visual mode (bright facial expressions and real-time application in natural lighting) work together to construct pathos, while the verbal mode provides logos through practical product commentary, confirming that the persuasiveness of this reel depends on the simultaneous interaction of all three modes. The persuasiveness of this reel depends on the simultaneous interaction of all three modes — a condition that MDA refers to as multimodal integration: the auditory mode (upbeat music) and visual mode (bright faci-

al expressions, natural lighting, real-time application) together construct pathos, while the verbal mode (spoken practical commentary addressing common consumer concerns) provides logos. Crucially, removing any single mode would significantly reduce the reel's persuasive effect, demonstrating that the meaning here is constructed between the modes rather than within any one of them.

10.Video Analysis 10

Table 10 Rhetorical and multimodal analysis of User J's " Glass Skin" authority and texture Demo

2. User J Duration: 0 :28s	
Ethos	The video shows a relatable ethos through the creator's filming in her bathroom with casual hair. However, she supports her credibility by mentioning external authority, claiming the product is "one of the most famous serums in Korea for glass skin," aligning herself with the highly trusted Korean skincare trend.
Pathos	The video begins with a "POV" (Point of View) text hook designed to make the viewer imagine themselves in that situation. The creator's smile, relaxed facial expressions, and glowing skin under natural sunlight evoke feelings of satisfaction and desire.
Logos	The logical reasoning is visual and tactile. She physically drains the serum to show the "milky" texture, applies it on her skin to show the immediate glow, and logically positions it as a practical multi-use product.
Multimodal Elements	Visual mode: bathroom setting, milky serum texture demonstration, glowing skin under natural sunlight — providing the main logical evidence. Auditory mode: relaxed background audio reinforcing the calm self-care atmosphere. Verbal mode: POV text hook drawing the viewer into the scenario, spoken product de-

	scription referencing the Korean skincare authority ("one of the most famous serums in Korea for glass skin").
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Discussion of table 10

This UGC video demonstrates that logos is the strongest appeal. While it is emotionally attractive to the idea of "glass skin" (pathos), the video is highly persuasive because it gives the viewer solid, logical reasons to buy it. By explaining the benefits and showing the texture, the creator makes the viewer feel that buying this serum is a smart, logical decision. From a multimodal perspective, the verbal mode (POV text hook and spoken product description) initiates emotional engagement, while the visual mode (serum texture demonstration and glowing skin in natural light) delivers the logical proof, showing how verbal and visual modes collaborate to make logos the most dominant appeal in this reel. This reel demonstrates modal sequencing as a persuasive strategy: the verbal mode (the POV text hook) initiates emotional engagement at the opening, drawing the viewer into the scenario before any product claim is made, after which the visual mode (serum texture demonstration and glowing skin under natural sunlight) delivers the logical proof. This temporal sequencing of modal functions — verbal mode opening the emotional frame, visual mode closing the logical argument — represents a form of intermodal complementarity in which the modes cooperate across time rather than simultaneously, making logos the dominant appeal by the reel's conclusion.

Section two: Questionnaire analysis

A questionnaire was completed by 30 female participants. Results show the following:

I. Basic information

Table 11 age range of participants in the User-Generated content survey

Age range	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
18 – 25	28	93.3%
25 – 35	2	6.7%
35 +	0	0%

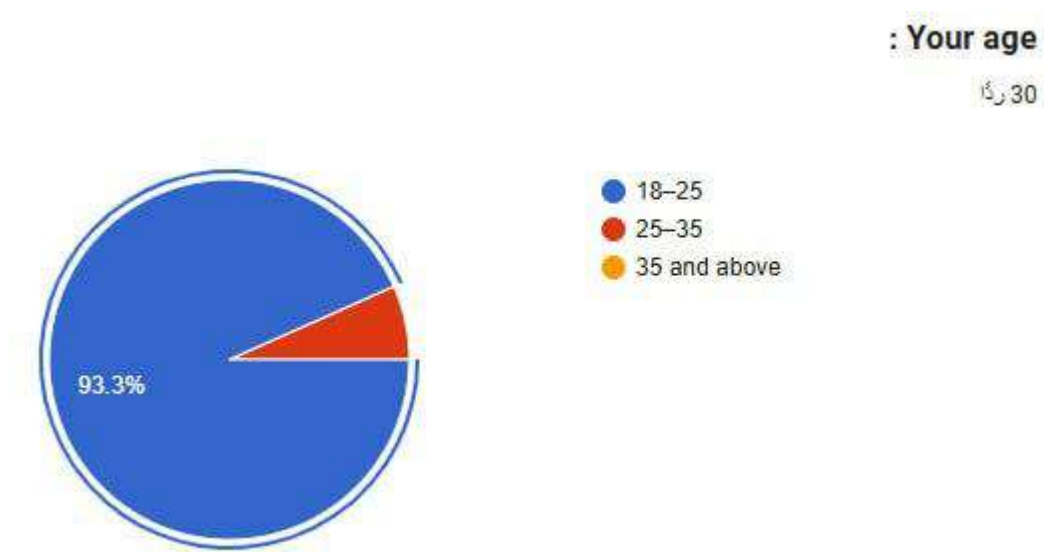


Figure 1 respondents' Age groups

Discussion of Table 11

Young adult (18-25) represents the majority of the sample, which is very important since they are the main audience for Instagram Reels and user-generated content. This is reflected in a percentage of (93.3%). Moreover, only two participants who are aged between 25-35, with a percentage of (6.7%), and no participant over the age of 35 was found, suggesting that Instagram reels engagement is primarily associated with younger age groups which are more likely to be influenced by recommendations and user-generated reviews.

Table 12 frequency of instagram reels scrolling time Among participants

Time scrolling	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
More than 8 hours	7	23.3%
5 – 8 hours	5	16.7%
3 – 4 hours	6	20%
1 – 2 hours	10	33.3%
Less than 1 hour	2	6.7%

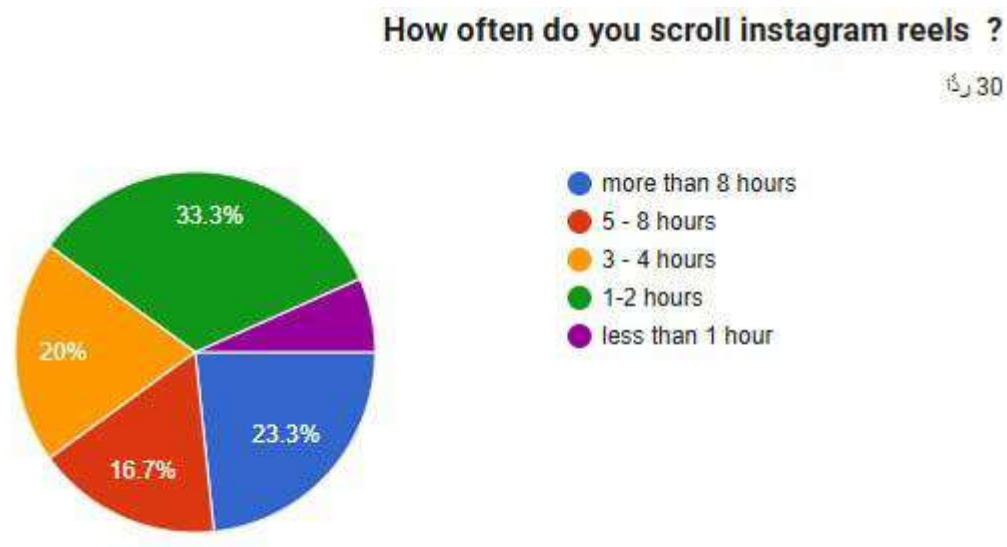


Figure 2 time spent scrolling instagram reels

Discussion of table 12

The majority of participants report spending considerable time scrolling Instagram Reels on a daily basis, which means they are exposed to a lot UGC content. Specifically, 33.3% (10 participants) spend 1-2 hours, followed by 23.3% (7 participants) who spend more than 8 hours, 20% (6 participants) who spend 3-4 hours, 16.7% (5 participants) who spend 8 hours, and only 6.7% (2 participants) spend less than 1 hour. This validates the need for analyzing UGC's impact on this audience.

Table 13 participants' engagement with cosmetic brands on Instagram

Response	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
Yes, many	18	60%
Yes, a few	6	20%
No, but I see cosmetic con-	2	6.7%
No, not at all	4	13.3%

Do you follow any cosmetic brands (makeup, skincare, haircare) on Instagram

30

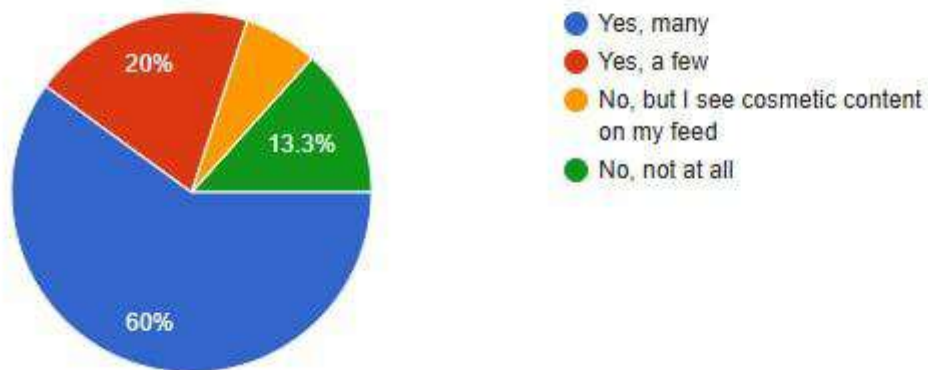


Figure 3 cosmetic brand following behavior on instagram

Discussion of Table 13

The results show that 80% of participants actively follow cosmetic brands on Instagram, with 60% following many brands and 20% following a few. Additionally, 6.7% do not follow cosmetic brands but still encounter cosmetic content while scrolling. This indicates a high level of engagement with cosmetic content among the sample, showing high that Instagram is a key platform for cosmetic brand exposure.

Table 14 participants' trust levels toward different types of cosmetic content

Content type	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
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A brand's own advertisement	3	10%
A regular user's video review (UGC)	10	33.3%
A celebrity endorsement	3	10%
I trust none of them	14	46.7%

Which type of cosmetic content do you trust the most? (choose only one)

30

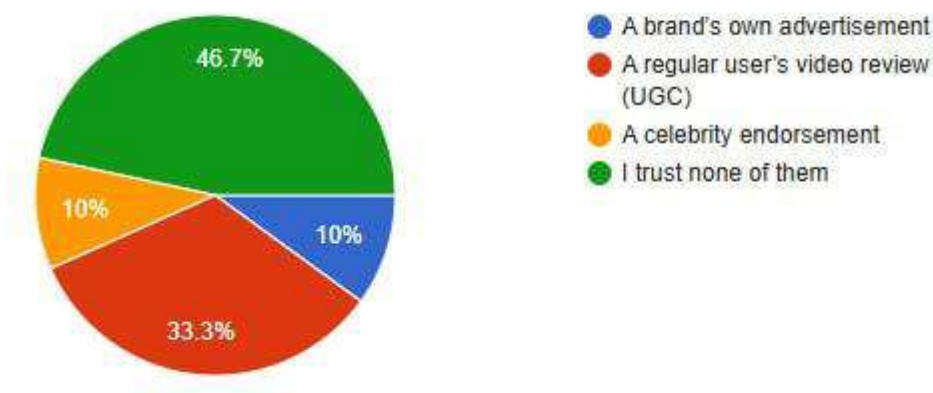


Figure 4 most trusted type of cosmetic content

Discussion of Table 14

This is very important that UGC is the most trusted among the positive options, with 33.3% trusting a regular user's video review (UGC), while only 10% trust a brand's own advertisement and 10% trust celebrity endorsement. However, nearly half of the participants 46.7%, reported that distrust all content types. This suggests that people are generally doubtful or careful, but UGC helps reduce that doubt to some extent.

II. Views on User-Generated Content (UGC) for Cosmetics

Table 15 perceived authenticity of UGC cosmetic content through participants

Response	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
Strongly Agree	6	20%
Agree	14	46.7%
Neutral	6	20%
Disagree	3	10%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.3%

I find UGC videos about makeup or skincare more authentic than .official brand ads

30

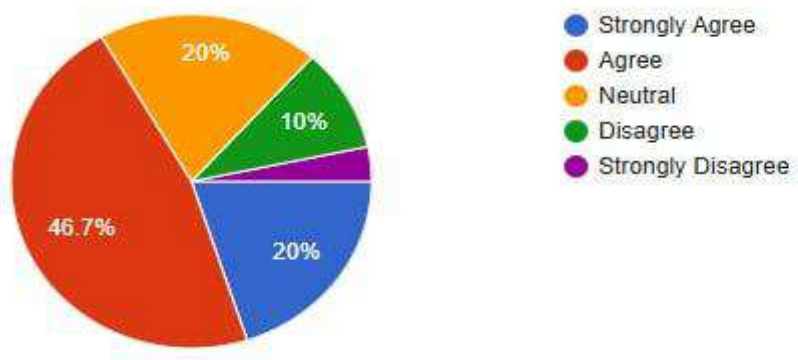


Figure 5 perceived authenticity of UGC videos compared to official brand ads

Discussion of Table 15

The results reveal that 66.7% of participants agree that UGC cosmetic videos feel more authentic than official brand advertisements, with 30% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing. Meanwhile, 13.3% (4 participants) remained neutral, and 13.3% (4 participants) disagreed. Only 3.3% strongly disagreed. This supports the core argument that UGC has a credibility advantage over polished advertising, as the majority of participants perceive user-created content more relatable.

Table 16 trust in regular user reviews compared to celebrity endorsements trust in regular user reviews compared to celebrity endorsements

Response	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	30%
Agree	12	40%
Neutral	4	13.3%
Disagree	4	13.3%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.3%

When I see a normal person (not a celebrity) reviewing a cosmetic product on Instagram Reels, I feel that person is being honest

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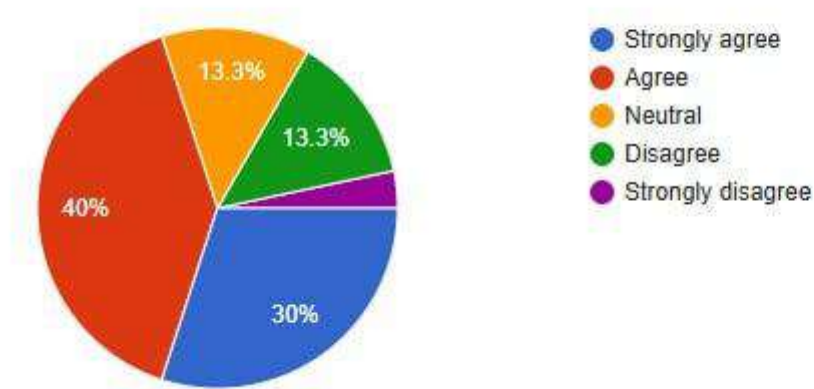


Figure 6 perceived honesty of non-celebrity users reviewing cosmetic products on Instagram reels

Discussion of Table 16

Everyday UGC producers are more convincing than celebrities or companies, as evidenced by the fact that 70% of people think non-celebrity reviewers are honest.

Table 17 impact of UGC reels on participants' opinions about cosmetic products

Response	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
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Strongly Agree	5	16.7%
Agree	14	46.7%
Neutral	7	23.3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	4	13.3%

I have changed my opinion about a cosmetic product (positively or .negatively) after watching a UGC Reel

30

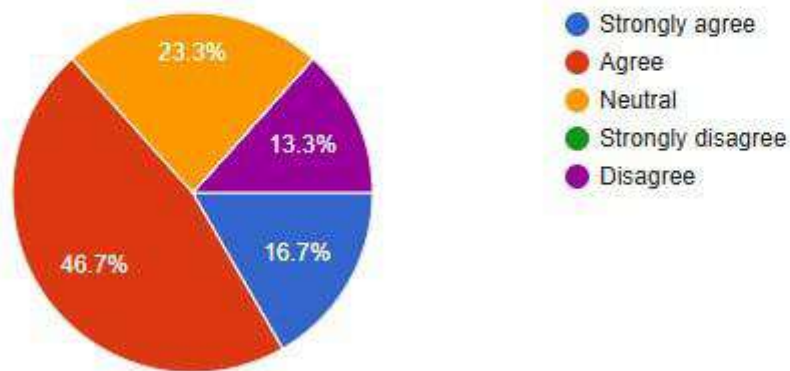


Figure 7 opinion changes toward cosmetic products after watching a UGC reel

Discussion of Table 17

UGC has a real effect on customer perception, as shown by the fact that 63.4% of respondents changed their view (either positively or negatively) following a UGC reel. Specifically, 46.7% (14 participants) agreed and 16.7% (5 participants) strongly agreed that their opinion changed. Also, 23.3% (7 participants) remained neutral, 13.3% (4 participants) disagreed, and no participant strongly disagreed. This indicates the significant influence that UGC content exerts on shaping consumers' attitudes toward cosmetic products.

Table 18 Factors that motivate participants to try New cosmetic products from Instagram

Response	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
A brand ad with professional visuals	2	6.7%
A UGC video showing real results	13	43.3%
A discount code from a creator	0	0%
Many positive comments from other	15	50%

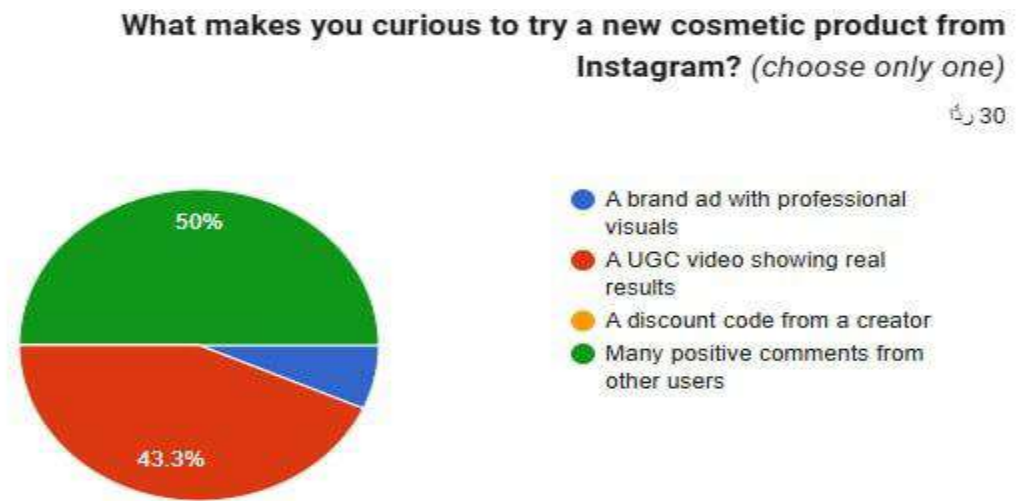


Figure 8 factors driving curiosity to try a new cosmetic product from Instagram Factors driving curiosity to try a new cosmetic product from Instagram

Discussion of Table 18

Table 08 results indicate the importance of social influence in driving curiosity toward new cosmetic products. The majority of participants, 50% (15 participants), reported that many positive comments from other users make them curious to try a new product, while 43.3% (13 participants) indicated that a UGC video showing real results influences their curiosity. In contrast, only 6.7% (2 participants) were motivated by a brand

ad with professional visuals. This clearly demonstrates the power of social proof (comments and UGC) over professional advertising in influencing purchase curiosity.

III. What persuades you in cosmetic reels

Table 19 key characteristics of trustworthy cosmetic UGC creators

Trust fact	Number	Percentage
The creator shows real skin without filters	18	60%
The creator mentions both good and bad points	21	70%
The creator has used the product for a long	17	56.7%
The creator looks like an ordinary person	12	40%

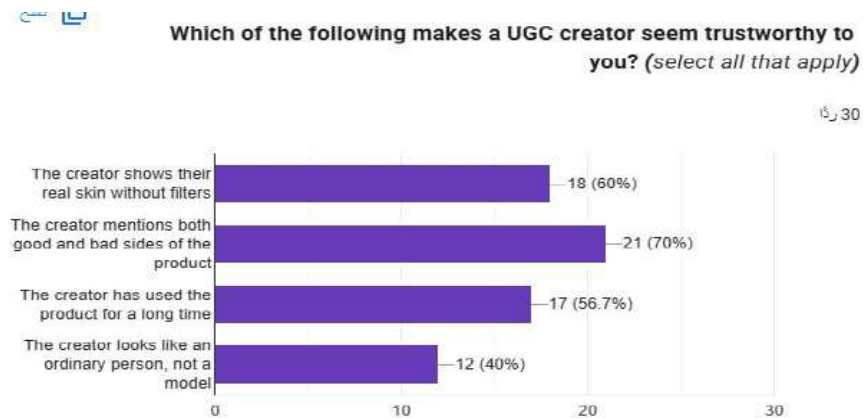


Figure 9
most influ-

ential emotional reaction in a UGC reel driving purchase intent

Discussion of table 19

The best evidence of trust are balanced reviews and authenticity (the creator shows real skin without filters, mentioning good and bad points, and using the product for a long time). With 60% selecting real skin without filters as the top trust factor. This means viewers are intelligent and capable of identifying fake content, and they value honesty and transparency.

Table 20 most influential emotional responses to UGC cosmetic reels

Emotional reaction	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
Happiness / excitement	3	10%
Surprise	4	13.3%
Relatability (common skin problem)	20	66.7%
Fear / frustration (bad effects)	3	10%

Which emotional reaction in a UGC Reel influence you the most to buy a product? (choose only one)

30

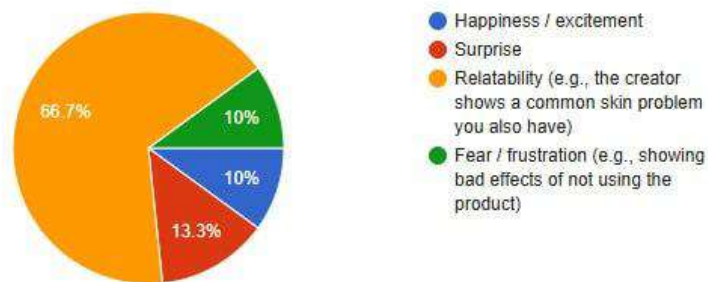


Figure 10 most believable logical element in a UGC reel

Discussion of Table 20

This result highlights that relatability is the dominant emotional factor, with 66.7% participants reporting that relatability to common skin problems in UGC reels influences them the most to buy a product. This is followed by surprise with 13.3% participants, while happiness/excitement and fear/frustration each accounted for 10% (3 participants) each. When creators share experiences or skin concerns similar to those of the viewers, it creates a strong emotional connection and encourages them to buy the product.

Table 21 logical elements in UGC reels

Logical elements	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
Before-and-after visuals	10	33.3%
The creator explains ingredients or how the product works	7	23.3%
The creator shows the product being used step by step	7	23.3%
Statistics or facts (e.g., "90% saw results")	6	20%

Which logical element in a UGC Reel makes you believe in a product? (choose only one)

30

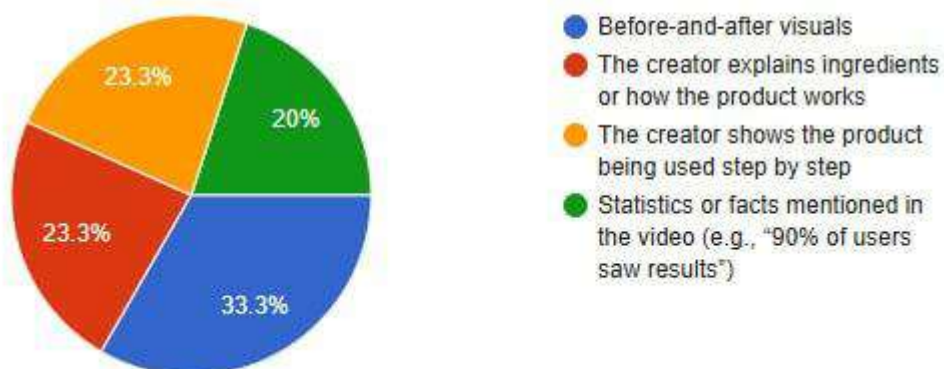


Figure 11 logical elements that enhance product belief in UGC reels

Discussion of table 21

Table 11 shows that before-and-after visuals are the strongest logical factor, with 33.3% (10 participants) selecting it as the most convincing element in a UGC reel. This is followed by 23.3% (7 participants) who are convinced when the creator explains ingredients or how the product works. The responses are still spread across different types of proof, which suggests that audiences are influenced by more than one kind of evidence, not only visual proof.

Table 22 most persuasive elements in cosmetic UGC reels

Persuasive element	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
The honest personality of the creator	11	36.7%
The emotional story or feeling	2	6.7%
The logical proof or evidence	12	40%
The editing, music, or visual effects	5	16.7%

In your opinion, what is the most persuasive element in a cosmetic UGC Reel? (choose only one)

30

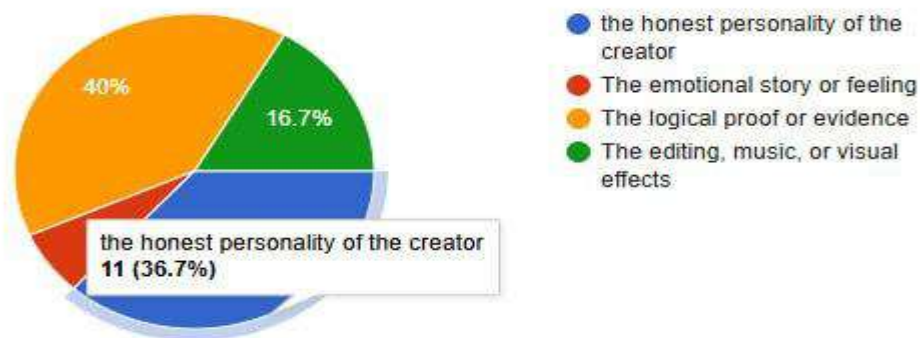


Figure 12 most persuasive element in a UGC reel

Discussion of table 22

Most of viewers are persuaded by two main things: logical proof, selected by 40% participants, followed by the creator's honesty which is 36.7% participants. Editing, music, or visual effects were chosen by 16.7% participants, while only 6.7% participants were persuaded by emotional story or feeling. This shows that most viewers are persuaded by logical proof and the creator's honesty, meaning people trust UGC more when creators provide clear evidence and real experiences rather than simply trying to entertain the audience.

Table 23 behavioral responses of participants after liking a product-related reel

Action	Number (out of 30)	Percentage
Save the video	13	43.3%
Search for price	6	20.0%
Go to brand's page	6	20.0%
Share with a friend	7	23.3%
Do own research / read reviews	10	33.3%
Nothing / none	2	6.7%

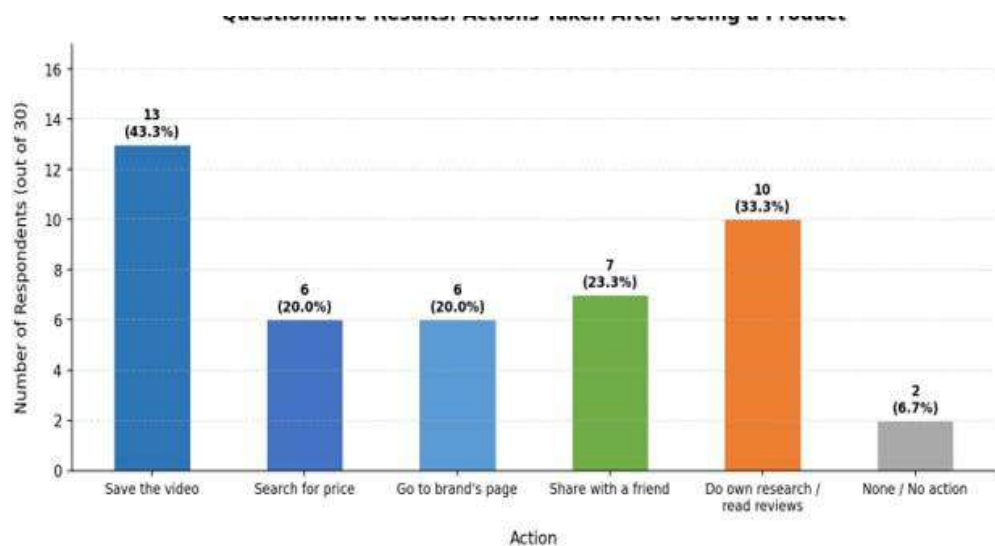


Figure 13 consumer actions taken after watching a cosmetic UGC reel

Discussion of table 23

Respondents rarely make immediate purchases after watching cosmetic reels. Rather, people often go through a research process in which they save the video, look for further information, evaluate items, and ultimately make a purchase decision. Saving the reel was the most popular activity (43.3%), followed by reading reviews or conducting research (33.3%). Strong engagement can also be seen by other activities including visiting the brand's page, checking prices, and sharing the reel with friends. This means that while UGC is successful at creating interest and drawing attention, it mostly starts the purchase process rather than finishing it.

Overall Discussion

The analysis of the ten UGC cosmetic reels reveals consistent patterns in how multimodal elements are used to construct persuasive strategies. Across all reels, pathos emerges as the most dominant persuasive appeal, present in all ten videos through auditory elements such as background music, and visual elements such as facial expressions, slow-motion shots, and aesthetic settings. This finding aligns with the results of the questionnaire, in which 66.7% of participants identified relatability as the emotional reaction that most influences them to buy a product. It is worth acknowledging, however, that the questionnaire data presents a more nuanced picture. Table 22 reveals that only 6.7% of participants identified "emotional story or feeling" as the most persuasive element in a UGC reel, in contrast to 40% who selected logical proof and 36.7% who selected the creator's honest personality. This apparent contradiction between the multimodal analysis which identifies pathos as dominant and the participants' self-reported responses can be explained by the distinction between conscious and subconscious persuasion. While audiences may not consciously recognize emotional appeals as their primary reason for being persuaded, the atmospheric pathos constructed through music, lighting, and visual mood operates at a sensory level that influences perception before rational evaluation occurs. This suggests that pathos in UGC reels functions less as an

explicit emotional narrative and more as an ambient persuasive environment that shapes the viewer's receptiveness to ethos and logos. In other words, pathos does not persuade viewers directly — it creates the emotional conditions under which ethos and logos become more convincing. This is consistent with the questionnaire finding that logical proof (40%) and creator honesty (36.7%) were rated as the most persuasive elements: these two appeals — logos and ethos — were able to succeed precisely because pathos had already established a positive and trusting atmosphere. Therefore, rather than contradicting the multimodal analysis, the questionnaire results reinforce it, suggesting that pathos operates as the foundational layer of persuasion in UGC cosmetic reels, upon which ethos and logos are built.

Ethos is constructed primarily through the visual mode specifically through before/after images, real skin demonstrations, and the use of natural, unfiltered settings. These visual choices signal authenticity and honesty, which the questionnaire confirms: 70% of participants stated they believe non-celebrity reviewers are being honest, and 60% identified "showing real skin without filters" as the most important trust factor.

Logos, while present in most reels, tends to play a supporting role rather than a dominant one. It is most effectively communicated through the verbal mode on-screen text showing ingredient percentages, product names, and step-by-step instructions and through the visual mode in the form of before/after transformations. The questionnaire results support this, with 33.3% of participants identifying before-and-after visuals as the most convincing logical element.

From a multimodal perspective, the analysis shows that no single mode operates in isolation. In most reels, the auditory mode creates emotional atmosphere, the visual mode provides both emotional appeal and logical proof, and the verbal mode supplies factual information. This interaction between modes confirms that persuasion in UGC

cosmetic reels is not achieved through a single element, but through the strategic combination of visual, auditory, and verbal resources working together to construct ethos, pathos, and logos simultaneously.

General Conclusion

This study set out to investigate how multimodal elements are used in User-Generated Content (UGC) Instagram Reels to construct persuasion in cosmetic advertising. By combining Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) with Aristotle's rhetorical framework of ethos, pathos, and logos, the research examined how ordinary content creators strategically deploy visual, verbal, and auditory modes to influence consumer attitudes and purchasing intentions in the beauty and skincare sector.

The analysis of ten purposively selected Instagram Reels revealed that persuasion in UGC cosmetic content is not achieved through any single element, but through the coordinated interaction of multiple semiotic modes working simultaneously.

The findings confirmed the first hypothesis, demonstrating that multimodal elements significantly enhance the persuasive impact of UGC cosmetic Reels. They also supported the second hypothesis, as pathos emerged as the dominant rhetorical appeal across the corpus, consistently constructed through background music, aesthetic visual transitions, emotional testimonies, and sensory product demonstrations.

Ethos was found to be frequently established through relatable self-presentation, before-and-after visual evidence, and association with trusted brands or professional endorsements. Logos, while present, proved to be the weakest appeal overall, realized mainly through the display of product names, ingredient percentages, and step-by-step usage demonstrations. These findings suggest that in the context of cosmetic advertising, emotional and credibility-based appeals carry more persuasive weight than purely logical arguments.

A key contribution of this study lies in its demonstration of intermodal complementarity the way in which multiple modes work in synchronization to amplify a single rhetorical appeal. This phenomenon highlights that the persuasive power of UGC Reels is inherently multimodal, and cannot be reduced to verbal or visual elements alone.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on multimodal persuasion in digital communication by applying established frameworks to a relatively understudied genre unpaid UGC cosmetic content. From a practical perspective, the findings offer valuable insights for content creators, marketers, and brands seeking to understand the rhetorical mechanisms that make UGC advertising effective.

Despite its limitations, including the small sample size, the focus on a single platform, and the gender-specific participant sample, this study opens avenues for further research. Future studies could expand the corpus to include other platforms such as TikTok or YouTube, incorporate male participants, or apply computational methods to analyze larger datasets of UGC content.

To sum up, this study demonstrates that UGC cosmetic Reels on Instagram are sophisticated rhetorical artifacts, in which ordinary users often unconsciously employ complex multimodal strategies to persuade their audiences. Understanding these strategies is essential for anyone navigating the rapidly evolving landscape of digital advertising and social media communication.

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Appendices

Appendice 01: UGC Reels links

1. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWT1Gsekk4P/?igsh=N2lmajQxY3J6ZTNk>
2. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQpBHqCiVf-/?igsh=ZzlxNDRkenN6djly>
3. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DVvvYJRAB07/?igsh=MWZrdWEwenRyZ2wxOQ==>
4. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DTdv9SLj0Vk/?igsh=MTlxdm94NDR3MTh1NQ==>
5. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DR7a5aDCGiR/?igsh=MTZmZ2JnZ3B5dm91dg==>
6. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DFAP51cAFJV/?igsh=MWV6czNxb2djeHV6YQ==>
7. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C09Q2rpsz5i/?igsh=NzNzZzE0NjdjaXli>
8. https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSIgfaE6_j/?igsh=bWlvcjBzZjg2ZDk0
9. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DReLhKujdai/?igsh=MWNnODI3eHM3YXV1Mg==>
10. https://www.instagram.com/reel/DBd_fs4gHi-/?igsh=ZmtkZ2NveDg0c2Nn

Perceptions of User-Generated Content (UGC) in Cosmetic Instagram Reels

Dear participants,

This questionnaire is part of a university dissertation on how user-generated cosmetic videos on Instagram Reels persuade viewers. **The term "User-Generated Content (UGC)" refers to videos or posts made by ordinary people, not by brands or celebrities.**

All your answers are anonymous and will be used only for academic purposes. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer honestly based on your own experience.

Thank you very much for your time.

** تشير إلى أن السؤال مطلوب.*

Basic information

1. Your age :*

حدد دائرة واحدة فقط

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 25-35
- ☐ 35 and above

2. ? How often do you scroll
instagram reels

*

حدد دائرة واحدة فقط

- ☐ more than 8 hours
- ☐ 5 - 8 hours
- ☐ 3 - 4 hours
- ☐ 1-2 hours
- ☐ less than 1 hour

3. Do you follow any cosmetic brands
(makeup, skincare, haircare) on
Instagram?

*

حدد دائرة واحدة فقط

- ☐ Yes, many
- ☐ Yes, a few
- ☐ No, but I see cosmetic content on
my feed
- ☐ No, not at all

4. Which type of cosmetic content do you trust the most? (choose only one) *

حدد دائرة واحدة فقط

- ☐ A brand's own advertisement
- ☐ A regular user's video review (UGC)
- ☐ A celebrity endorsement
- ☐ I trust none of them

YOUR VIEWS ON USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC) FOR COSMETICS

5. I find UGC videos about makeup or skincare more authentic than official brand ads. *

حدد دائرة واحدة فقط

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

6. When I see a normal person (not a celebrity) reviewing a cosmetic product on Instagram Reels, I feel that person is being honest. *

حدد دائرة واحدة فقط

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

7. I have changed my opinion about a cosmetic product (positively or negatively) after watching a UGC Reel. *

حدد دائرة واحدة فقط

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree

8. What makes you curious to try a new cosmetic product from Instagram? (choose only one) *

حدد دائرة واحدة فقط

- ☐ A brand ad with professional visuals
- ☐ A UGC video showing real results
- ☐ A discount code from a creator
- ☐ Many positive comments from other users

WHAT PERSUADES YOU IN COSMETIC UGC REELS

9. Which of the following makes a UGC creator seem trustworthy to you? (select all that apply) *

حدد كل الإجابات الملائمة

- The creator shows their real skin without filters ☐
- The creator mentions both good and bad sides of the product ☐
- The creator has used the product for a long time ☐
- The creator looks like an ordinary person, not a model ☐

10. Which emotional reaction in a UGC Reel influence you the most to buy a product? (choose only one) *

حدد دائرة واحدة فقط

- ☐ Happiness / excitement
- ☐ Surprise
- ☐ Relatability (e.g., the creator shows a common skin problem you also have)
- ☐ Fear / frustration (e.g., showing bad effects of not using the product)

11. Which logical element in a UGC Reel makes you believe in a product? (choose only one) *

حدد دائرة واحدة فقط

- ☐ Before-and-after visuals
- ☐ The creator explains ingredients or how the product works
- ☐ The creator shows the product being used step by step
- ☐ Statistics or facts mentioned in the video (e.g., "90% of users saw results")

12. **In your opinion, what is the most persuasive element in a cosmetic UGC Reel? (choose only one)**

حدد دائرة واحدة فقط

- ☐ the honest personality of the creator
- ☐ The emotional story or feeling
- ☐ The logical proof or evidence
- ☐ The editing, music, or visual effects

13. **what do you usually do after liking a cosmetic reel? (e.g., save the video, share with a friend, search for price, go to the brand's page, buy immediately)?** *

Google لم يتم إنشاء هذا المحتوى ولا اعتماده من قبل

نماذج Google

Résumé

Cette étude examine la construction multimodale de la persuasion dans les contenus générés par les utilisateurs (CGU) des courtes vidéos « Reels » publiées sur Instagram. S'appuyant sur l'analyse du discours multimodal (ADM) et le cadre rhétorique d'Aristote (ethos, pathos et logos), cette recherche examine comment les créateurs de contenu ordinaires combinent stratégiquement les modes visuel, verbal et auditif pour influencer les attitudes des consommateurs et leurs intentions d'achat dans le secteur de la beauté et des soins de la peau. Un corpus de dix Reels Instagram, produits par des utilisateurs non rémunérés faisant la promotion de produits de soins de la peau et de beauté, a été sélectionné et soumis à une analyse rhétorique multimodale. Les résultats révèlent que le pathos est la stratégie de persuasion dominante dans l'ensemble du corpus. À l'inverse, le logos était la stratégie de persuasion la moins utilisée. Il est intéressant de noter que l'étude montre en outre que le pouvoir de persuasion des Reels CGU réside dans le haut degré de complémentarité intermodale, grâce auquel plusieurs modes sémiotiques fonctionnent en synchronisation pour amplifier un seul appel rhétorique.

Mots-clés: CGU, ADM, cadre rhétorique d'Aristote, stratégie de persuasion, Reels Instagram.

ملخص الدراسة

ستكشف هذه الدراسة البناء متعدد الوسائط للإقناع في المحتوى الذي ينشئه المستخدمون (UGC) في مقاطع الفيديو القصيرة (Reels) المنشورة على إنستغرام. وبالاستناد إلى تحليل الخطاب متعدد الوسائط (MDA) والإطار البلاغي لأرسطو الذي يتضمن المصادقية (ethos) والعاطفة (pathos) والمنطق (logos)، يبحث هذا البحث في كيفية دمج منشئي المحتوى العاديين للأساليب البصرية واللفظية والسمعية بشكل استراتيجي للتأثير على مواقف المستهلكين ونواياهم الشرائية في قطاع التجميل والعناية بالبشرة. تم اختيار مجموعة من عشرة مقاطع فيديو قصيرة (Reels) من إنستغرام، أنتجها مستخدمون غير مدفوع لهم للترويج لمنتجات العناية بالبشرة والتجميل، وخضعت لتحليل بلاغي متعدد الوسائط. تكشف النتائج أن العاطفة (pathos) هي استراتيجية الإقناع السائدة في جميع مقاطع الفيديو. في المقابل، كان المنطق (logos) هو استراتيجية الإقناع الأقل استخدامًا. ومن المثير للاهتمام أن الدراسة تظهر كذلك أن القوة الإقناعية لمقاطع الفيديو التي ينشئها المستخدمون تكمن في الدرجة العالية من التكامل بين الوسائط، حيث تعمل أنماط دلالية متعددة في تزامن لتضخيم نداء بلاغي واحد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أساليب الإقناع، نموذج أرسطو، فيديوهات إنستغرام، المحتوى المنشأ من المستخدمين، تحليل الخطاب متعدد الوسائط.