

Consumer Online Brand Engagement as a Hierarchical Construct: How Consumption, Contribution, and Creation Drive Luxury Purchase Intention among Young Consumers in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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ABSTRACT

This research analyses consumer online brand engagement as a hierarchical behavioural construct and evaluates the effects of the behaviour on the luxury purchase intention of consumers in Ghana (Generation Z and Millennial). Based on Uses and Gratifications Theory and the typology of consumer online brand engagement, the research explores the relationship between firm-created content and user-generated content and three increasingly active levels of engagement: consumption, contribution and creation. An exploratory factor analysis, a reliability analysis, a correlation analysis and a hierarchical ordinary least squares regression were used to analyse a cross-sectional survey of 216 young consumers who follow luxury brands on social media. The findings show that firm-generated content is a good predictor of consumption and contribution, whereas user-generated content is a good predictor of consumption and creation. The combined model, which involved the three levels of engagement, consumption, contribution, and creation, had a significant influence on the purchase intention, though the contribution and creation had the greatest behavioural relevance. When the content antecedents were included in the entire model, consumption turned out to be insignificant, whereas contribution and creation were significant predictors. The platform analysis also reveals that consumption had a greater impact on visually oriented platform and contribution and creation had more impact on text-oriented platforms. The research expands consumer online brand engagement research to a understudied, Sub-Saharan African luxury context and demonstrates that high order engagement behaviours have more explanatory power over purchase intention than passive exposure..

Keywords: consumer online brand engagement, luxury brands, purchase intention, social media, Sub-Saharan Africa, Uses and Gratifications Theory..

INTRODUCTION:

The global luxury goods market has experienced a notable expansion into emerging economies, with Sub-Saharan Africa representing one of the fastest-growing consumer segments for premium brands (Deloitte, 2023). Within this region, Ghana has emerged as a focal point for luxury consumption research, driven by a youthful demographic profile, rising disposable incomes, and accelerating digital connectivity (World Bank, 2024). Over 60 per cent of Ghana's population is under the age of 35, and mobile internet penetration has surpassed 70 per cent, creating fertile conditions for social media to function as a primary channel through which young consumers discover, evaluate, and ultimately purchase luxury brands (DataReportal, 2025).

The studies of consumer engagement with online brands have been constructed primarily in the Western and East Asian environments, where the platform routines, symbolic consumption patterns, and consumer brand relationships are influenced by various social and economic factors (Al-Abdallah & Wright, 2025; Hanaysha, 2022). This is important since the luxury

consumption in the emerging African markets is not only related to the evaluation of products, but also to the status signalling, visibility to their peers, and digital self-presentation. Passive exposure to brand content might not take effect in such situations as more active participation. It cannot be assumed that the hierarchy of COBE established can be transferred to Sub-Saharan African luxury markets and must be directly examined empirically.

This study addresses this gap by focuses on consumer online brand engagement as a hierarchical behavioural construct in terms of luxury consumption among the young consumers in Ghana. The study identifies consumption, contribution and creation as more active brand-related behaviour in social media as suggested by Naeem et al. (2025). The study does not consider engagement as a homogenous concept but instead argues that the ability of these behavioural levels to influence purchase intention will be different. This is particularly relevant in the luxury markets where visibility, symbolic association and peer communication can enhance the behavioural value of higher order engagement. This study repackages the engagement of online brands as a broad,

undifferentiated notion into a hierarchical behavioural model, which allows for the differentiated impact of consumption, contribution and creation on purchase intention to be tested.

The research is based on Uses and Gratifications Theory, which describes media consumption as purposive and need-motivated behaviour (Kumar et al., 2022). Under the current circumstances, content produced by firms is supposed to fulfill primarily informational and aspirational functions, providing edited brand stories, product hints, and meaning symbols. The user-generated content is likely to fulfill the social proof, community and identity needs as it demonstrates how other consumers view, showcase and ascertain luxury brands in daily digital contexts. The study connects these types of content to the three COBE levels, elucidating not only the presence or absence of consumer engagement, but also how various content providers can push them towards more passive or more active levels of engagement.

This study adds to the literature on consumer behaviour in emerging markets by describing how digitally mediated interaction transforms into purchase intention in an African luxury setting, where companies must address brand relations in the context of various institutional and market conditions. The results inform digital consumer management, demonstrating that companies need to invest in content resources in the engagement tier that best predict intention, and need to customize engagement strategies based on platform architecture, as visual platforms reward consumption and text-oriented platforms reward contribution and creation (Scharlach & Hallinan, 2023; Herzallah et al., 2025). Specifically, the findings can also address consumer-driven content work management, as creation and contribution are more indicative of higher effort, which firms can foster through community governance, incentive design, and UGC stewardship rather than passively exposing consumers (Park et al., 2021; Sandunima & Jayasuriya, 2024).

The study works with survey data of 216 Generation Z and Millennial consumers in Accra who follow luxury brands on social media and then tests the impact of both firm-created content and user-generated content on the three levels of COBE, and then estimates the impact of each level on the luxury purchase intention. It also looks at the possibility of the existence of these relationships based on the type of platform, i.e., a visually based environment as compared to a text-based environment. There are three contributions of the study. To begin with, it expands the COBE chain to an untapped African luxury market. Second, it demonstrates whether the higher-order engagement behaviours are more effective in explaining the purchase intention than passive content consumption. Third, it takes into account the question of whether platform affordances change the value of the behaviour of each tier of engagement. This study adds to the context, mechanism and platform-specific knowledge of online luxury engagement.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Consumer Online Brand Engagement: The COBE Hierarchy

Consumer online brand engagement (COBE) refers to the spectrum of behavioural activities that consumers perform in relation to brands within digital environments (Muntinga et al., 2011). Building on earlier conceptualisations of engagement as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioural components (Aljarah et al., 2024; Huang & Zhou, 2025), Poirier et al. (2024) proposed that brand-related social media behaviours can be organised along a continuum of increasing activity and involvement. At the lowest level, consumption involves passive behaviours such as browsing brand pages, viewing posts, and reading reviews. Contribution represents a moderate level of engagement that includes liking, sharing, and commenting on brand content. At the highest level, creation involves the active production of brand-related content, including posting original reviews, creating user-generated videos, or co-developing brand narratives.

Online brand engagement by consumers can be conceptualised as a continuum of consumption to contribution, ranked hierarchically and analytically convenient for management research, as it defines how the digital audience moves through the levels of attention, visible involvement and contribution. This view is consistent with Management and Labour Studies, as it considers engagement as market participation to be managed by firms through content strategy, trust building and incentive design. The journal provides evidence that the state of digital adoption and trialability can influence user engagement with online services (Pobee, 2022). That trust and satisfaction can yield better results than price-based incentives alone in m-commerce (Mishra & Sengupta, 2024). Complex buying behaviour is another aspect structured by social media, underscoring the need to differentiate levels of engagement (Zahoor & Shah, 2024).

Whereas the behavioural difference between consumption, contribution, and creation is supported by past research, the empirical significance of these levels might be changed in various market contexts. Contribution and creation in more developed digital environments may also be more indicative of more brand engagement since it takes more time, effort, and identity investment (Ao et al., 2023; Zeqiri et al., 2025). This trend might not be directly applied to the new markets in Africa, where the terms of access, platform usage, and standards of online expression vary. Moreover, luxury consumption can enhance the symbolic nature of visible interaction since the visibility of association with luxurious brands can serve as self-presentation (Cheah et al., 2024). This is why the hierarchy can be regarded as a categorization of the actions on the Internet and as a scale of behavioural commitment, the downstream impact of which can be context-dependent. The point here is that this review is expected to demonstrate why the hierarchy can be more significant in the symbolic consumption environments.

Uses and Gratifications Theory as a Theoretical Lens

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) provides the theoretical foundation for understanding why consumers engage with brand-related content on social media (Li et al., 2025). UGT posits that individuals actively select

media to fulfil specific needs, including informational, social, entertainment, and self-expressive gratifications (Sardar et al., 2024). Within the context of brand engagement, informational gratifications drive consumers to seek content produced by brands themselves (firm-created content), while social gratifications motivate engagement with content produced by fellow consumers (user-generated content) (Creevey et al., 2022).

A firm-generated content and user-generated content are not merely different in terms of source, but also in terms of the form of credibility and satisfaction which they provide. Controlled and aesthetically refined messages developed by the firm tend to assist consumers in learning about products, assessing brand symbolism, and reading official brand identity (Benevento et al., 2025). User-generated content will offer experiential and socially embedded cues, which can be viewed as more authentic as they are created by fellow users, not the brand itself (Thanasi-Boçe et al., 2024). This difference is significant to luxury consumption as consumers tend to consider both the aspirational image that the brand is selling and the social legitimacy signaled by other users. The most important aspect is that FCC and UGC must be interpreted as two contrasting informational settings, as opposed to the two straightforward sources of messages.

Firm Created Content and Engagement

The content that is produced by firms is likely to impact the bottom and the middle levels of the COBE hierarchy more than the top level. Due to its purpose of informing, drawing attention and portraying brand image, it would be especially suitable to arouse consumption behaviours like viewing, browsing and reading. It can also foster contribution with consumers responding to refined advertisements by liking, sharing or commenting, particularly when the content resonates with aspirational self-image in the luxurious sphere (Liu et al., 2021; Casais et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the FCC might be less prone to stimulate creation on its own due to the original content production typically needing a more forceful personal touch and social encouragement than brand messages typically offer (Chetioui et al., 2020). The most important thing is that the FCC should be placed as a probable generator of lower and middle-order engagement as opposed to general engagement. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: Firm-created content positively predicts consumption behaviour.

H1b: Firm-created content positively predicts contribution behaviour.

User Generated Content and Engagement

The interaction of user-generated content is predicted to influence engagement in terms of peer relevancy and perceived authenticity. Peer reviews, styling posts and informal recommendations are some of the methods consumers adopt to minimize the uncertainty and evaluations of the reception of a luxury brand in reference groups (Alrwashdeh, 2025). This will boost consumption as consumers will be encouraged to see and compare peer experiences. Meanwhile, UGC can provoke the creation more directly than FCC due to the fact that the perceived

boundary between the audience and producer is lowered. When customers are repeatedly exposed to the brand storytelling by peers, they could perceive their own posting, reviewing or showcasing behaviour as a normative and socially valuable behaviour (Cheung et al., 2025). The most important thing is that UGC is to be substantiated as a more powerful stimulus to peer-to-peer involvement and original content creation. Thus:

H2a: User-generated content positively predicts consumption behaviour.

H2b: User-generated content positively predicts creation behaviour.

COBE Hierarchy and Purchase Intention

The suggested correlation between the COBE hierarchy and the purchase intention is based on the principle of the dependence of behavioural intensity on the growing psychological commitment. Consumption implies that it is attentional, although it could be observational and low risk. Contribution demands observable engagement with brand content and thus implies a greater degree of evaluative engagement and individual level of public identification with the brand (Gupta & Lyndem, 2024). Creation is the most intensive type since consumers are putting effort into designing original brand-relevant material that denotes higher congruency in terms of identity, and the possibility of a higher chance of brand meaning being internalized (Duong & Sung, 2021). In luxury contexts, with brands having symbolic and social significance, these more advanced types of engagement might be particularly significant since conspicuous involvement can strengthen self-image and expected social acknowledgement. The assumptions should be based on increasing behavioural commitment as opposed to mere activity differences. Thus:

H3: Consumption positively predicts luxury purchase intention.

H4: Contribution positively predicts luxury purchase intention.

H5: Creation positively predicts luxury purchase intention.

Platform Type as a Moderator

The type of platform is also likely to influence the value of behaviour of each tier of COBE since platforms vary in affordances, structures of visibility, and rules of participation. Visual mediums favor visual exposure, rich in images, and video exposure, which can enhance the persuasive power of consumption, enabling users to consume luxury symbolism in a short period of time by repeatedly looking at it (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024). In comparison, platforms that are more text-based or discussion-oriented demand a higher level of explicit interaction and verbal involvement, which can augment the value of contribution and creation as a measure of deeper processing and social involvement (Ibrahim et al., 2022; Thanasi-Boçe et al., 2022). The anticipated moderation is not the result of labeling platforms as such, but rather how platform architecture alters the sense of a particular act of engagement. The moderation hypothesis should be supported with a more affordance-based

explanation. These platform differences suggest that the relative importance of each COBE tier for predicting purchase intention may vary across platform types:

H6: The relationship between COBE engagement tiers and purchase intention differs across visually oriented and text-oriented social media platforms.

The review indicates that there is a sequential reasoning whereby the content source determines engagement form, and purchase intention is defined by engagement form. The model is not based on the assumption that the behavioural effects of all social media contact are equal.

Rather, it hypothesizes that the credibility of the source and platform affordances have a combined effect on whether consumers are passive observers or active participants in the brand meaning-making (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024). The most important aspect is that the conceptual model needs to be presented as a unified causal logic and not a set of disjunctive assumptions. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework integrating the UGT antecedents, the COBE hierarchy, and the purchase intention outcome, together with the moderating role of platform type.

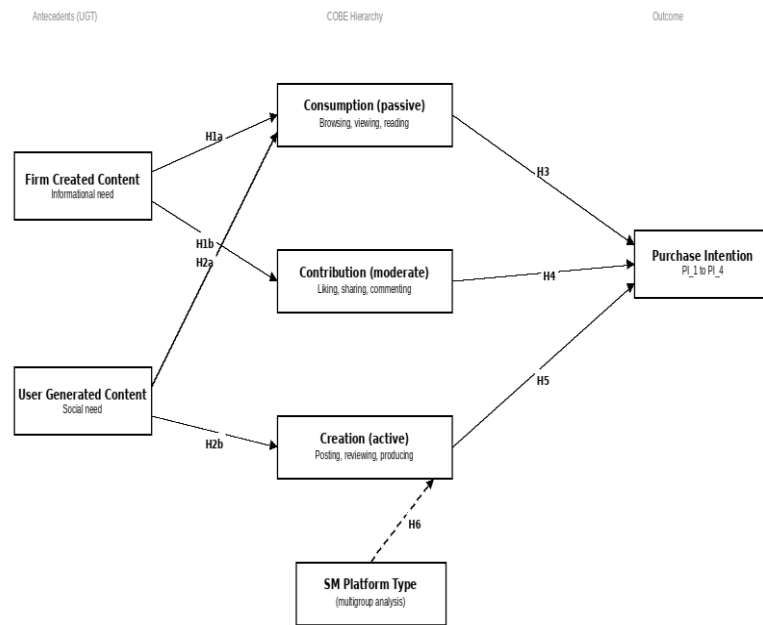


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: UGT Antecedents, COBE Hierarchy, and Purchase Intention

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Context

The quantitative survey design was cross-sectional in nature since the research was interested in establishing theoretically defined relationships between content exposure, engagement behaviours and purchase intent amongst a limited group of consumers. The location in the empirical study was Accra, Ghana. The city of Accra was chosen due to its status as the principal commercial and media hub of the country, a fairly high level of internet and smartphone penetration, and a high concentration of young consumers, who are more likely to follow international luxury brands on the internet. Although the research does not assert that Accra is a comprehensive depiction of all Ghanaian consumers, it offers an analytically valid urban environment for studying digitally mediated luxury consumption of the target group. The most important thing is that the city is confirmed as an appropriate research site as opposed to a complete national proxy.

Sampling and Data Collection

Purposive sampling was used to recruit respondents, with the selection criterion that they have the behavioural profile required for the study. The inclusion criteria were: (1) being a resident of Ghana, (2) aged 18 to 40 years, and

(3) subscribing to at least one luxury brand on social media. The exclusion criteria included: those who were not within the age bracket, were not residents or did not subscribe to any luxury brand. The online questionnaire was shared via specific posts on Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter/X, as well as via the digital networks of universities in Accra, to reach digital Generation Z and Millennial users. To determine the clarity of the items, time to complete, and the survey's flow, a pretest was conducted with (n = 30) eligible respondents, and slight wording changes were made before launch. Data collection was conducted from August 2025 to November 2025. Participation was voluntary, and ethical practices were adhered to by obtaining informed consent, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality in responses, and not collecting any personally identifying information. To reduce the number of invalid results, the dataset was filtered for large amounts of missing data, straight lining, duplicate entries and implausibly short completion times. 216 usable responses were retained after cleaning, which was sufficient to perform the planned factor analysis and regression modeling.

Measurement Instrument

Multi-item Likert scales, with a range of 1, strongly disagree to 5, strongly agree, were used to measure all constructs. Four items that were adapted from Schivinski

and Dabrowski (2016) were used to measure firm-created content and user-generated content. COBE measured the three behavioural dimension items, which were adapted by Muntinga et al. (2011), consumption (five items), contribution (six items), and creation (six items). Four items (adapted) by Dodds et al. (1991) were used to assess purchase intention. Items and questions about social media use were also incorporated in the questionnaire. To conduct the platform comparison analysis, the secondary platform was determined by the respondents who were used to following luxury brands. This leading platform measure was subsequently categorized as either a visually oriented or text-oriented platform for the moderation analysis. The operational basis of each construct and the platform in which all these constructs are assembled should be clearly stated and in a consistent manner.

Data Analysis Strategy

Analysis of data was done in four phases. The data were filtered out first, in terms of missing data, outliers and simple distributional issues. Second, the measures' internal structure was analyzed with the help of exploratory factor analysis with the varimax rotation and the Cronbach alpha reliability was assessed. Since the study used regression based study design as opposed to a full structural equation model, evidence of construct validity was considered carefully and was utilized as supplementary evidence as opposed to confirmatory evidence. Third, initial relationships between the variables were evaluated by computing descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations. Fourth, the hypotheses were tested on the basis of hierarchical ordinary least squares regression models. The antecedent models determined the impact of firm-created content and the user-generated content on the three levels of engagement, and outcome level models evaluated the contribution of consumption, contribution and creation to purchase intention in a relative manner. The moderating effect of platform type was tested by estimating interaction terms and group-specific regression models. All calculations were done in

Python version 3.12 with the use of pandas, scipy, statsmodels and numpy. The main thing is that the analysis strategy must correspond to the research design mentioned and should not give a false impression of stronger confirmation of the measurement than is provided by the design.

Since all the variables were measured by the use of a single self-report questionnaire, measures were put in place to minimize common method bias. Predictor and outcome sides of the questionnaire were separated, and question wording was maintained to be clear and concise to ensure that the respondent felt confidential and to minimize consistency-driven responses. To evaluate the possibility of common method bias in the single-source survey design, a single-factor test was conducted using an unrotated exploratory factor analysis of all measurement items. The former explained 41.2 per cent of the total variance, which is not more than the traditional 50 per cent, indicating that no single latent factor dominates the covariance structure.

RESULTS

Sample Profile

Table 1 gives the demographic profile of the sample. Among the 216 respondents, the proportion of those who were female was 57.4 percent, and the proportion of those who were aged between 25 and 34 was 75.9 percent, which is also in line with the target market of young adult consumers. Almost half of the sample had bachelors degree, and 49.1 per cent were students. This profile implies that the sample covers a digitally active and fairly educated group of young consumers, but also implies that the results are to be treated with some caution since the sample is skewed towards student respondents. Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Twitter/X were the most commonly used platforms in terms of platform use, which justifies the reason the platform-based comparison was formulated later in the analysis.

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 216)*

Characteristic	n	%
Gender		
Male	92	42.6
Female	124	57.4
Age		
18–24	17	7.9
25–34	164	75.9
35–40	27	12.5
Over 40	8	3.7
Education		
Senior High School	35	16.2
Bachelor's degree	105	48.6

Postgraduate diploma	38	17.6
Master’s degree or above	38	17.6
Occupation		
Student	106	49.1
Employed (public or private sector)	71	32.9
Self-employed / Other	39	18.1
Secondary Social Media Platform		
Instagram	55	25.5
TikTok	51	23.6
YouTube	49	22.7
Twitter/X	48	22.2
Other (Facebook, Snapchat)	13	6.0

Note. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Measurement Validation

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .865, and Bartlett’s test of sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 3,905.39, p < .001$), confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis. An EFA with varimax rotation extracted six factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0, collectively accounting for 66.5 per cent of the total variance. Items loaded on their theoretically expected factors, with primary loadings ranging from .55 to .90 and no problematic cross-loadings exceeding .40.

The reliability and additional validity indicators of all constructs are provided in Table 2. The values of

Cronbach's alpha were between .797 and .887, which suggests that there is an acceptable internal consistency in all the measures. The values of composite reliability were also above .70 which is another evidence of the consistency of the scale. Purchase intention and creation had the highest average variance extracted, and various other constructs had lower average variance than the standard .50 cut-off. These smaller AVE values indicate that convergent validity is to be viewed with a grain of salt and that certain measures can be improved in subsequent studies. The measures, however, when combined with the pattern of factor loading and reliability coefficient, were deemed sufficient for the current regression-based analysis.

Table 2. Reliability, Validity, and Descriptive Statistics (N = 216)

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	α	CR	AVE	VIF
FCC	4	3.775	0.706	.815	.733	.409	1.876
UGC	4	3.779	0.638	.797	.703	.373	1.933
Consumption	5	3.614	0.701	.796	.718	.339	1.686
Contribution	6	3.293	0.785	.859	.819	.441	1.785
Creation	6	2.729	0.844	.887	.854	.495	1.681
Purchase Intention	4	3.752	0.795	.879	.829	.549	—

Note. α = Cronbach alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; VIF = Variance Inflation Factor from the full model. All HTMT ratios were below .85.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 presents the Pearson bivariate correlation matrix for all study variables. All correlations were positive and statistically significant ($p < .01$). Among the COBE tiers, contribution and creation shared the strongest intercorrelation ($r = .617, p < .001$), suggesting that consumers who engage in moderate-level interaction are also likely to engage in active content creation. The correlations between each COBE tier and purchase

intention were moderate: consumption ($r = .373$), contribution ($r = .450$), and creation ($r = .435$), providing preliminary support for the hypothesised relationships. The antecedent variables, FCC and UGC, were strongly correlated with each other ($r = .650, p < .001$) and with the COBE tiers, particularly consumption (.523 and .529, respectively). Importantly, all variance inflation factors (VIF) in Table 2 were below 2.0, indicating no multicollinearity concerns in the regression models.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Matrix (N = 216)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. FCC	—					
2. UGC	.650***	—				
3. Consumption	.523***	.529***	—			
4. Contribution	.288***	.325***	.403***	—		
5. Creation	.179**	.172*	.360***	.617***	—	
6. PI	.372***	.370***	.373***	.450***	.435***	—

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. PI = Purchase Intention.

Hypothesis Testing: Antecedents of COBE

The given antecedent models in support of H1a, H1b, H2a and H2b are supported. Firm created content significantly predicted consumption ($\beta = .519, t = 8.970, p < .001, R^2 = .273$) and contribution ($\beta = .320, t = 4.394, p < .001, R^2 = .083$). User generated content significantly predicted consumption ($\beta = .582, t = 9.123, p < .001, R^2 = .280$) and creation ($\beta = .228, t = 2.556, p = .011, R^2 = .030$). Consumption had the most powerful explanatory effects, and both FCC and UGC had an effect on consumption. In comparison, the UGC to creation relationship was important, but it had a relatively low percentage of variance. These results show that the power of the content antecedents does not have a similar impact on all levels of engagement. The decisive aspect is that both types of content are important and direct consumers towards various types of interactions with varying degrees of intensity.

Hypothesis Testing: COBE and Purchase Intention

To test H3 through H5, both individual and simultaneous regression models were estimated. In the individual models, consumption ($\beta = .423, p < .001, R^2 = .139$), contribution ($\beta = .456, p < .001, R^2 = .203$), and creation ($\beta = .410, p < .001, R^2 = .189$) each significantly predicted purchase intention, providing initial support for all three hypotheses.

The critical test, however, involved a simultaneous regression model in which all three COBE tiers were entered as predictors of purchase intention. This model was significant ($F(3, 212) = 26.81, p < .001, R^2 = .275$, adjusted $R^2 = .265$). All three predictors remained significant: consumption ($\beta = .227, t = 3.087, p = .002$), contribution ($\beta = .239, t = 3.071, p = .002$), and creation ($\beta = .205, t = 2.892, p = .004$). These results support H3, H4, and H5.

A full mediation model incorporating FCC and UGC alongside the three COBE tiers yielded an R^2 of .321 (adjusted $R^2 = .305$). In this model, FCC retained a marginally significant direct effect on purchase intention ($\beta = .178, p = .044$), UGC's direct effect was nonsignificant ($\beta = .170, p = .086$), and consumption also

became nonsignificant ($\beta = .061, p = .467$). Contribution ($\beta = .187, p = .016$) and creation ($\beta = .235, p = .001$) remained the strongest significant predictors. This pattern suggests that the effect of consumption on purchase intention is largely absorbed by the higher-order engagement behaviours when all tiers are modelled simultaneously.

Multigroup Analysis: Platform Type (H6)

To test H6, the sample was divided into visually oriented platform users (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat; $n = 153$) and text-oriented platform users (Facebook, Twitter/X, LinkedIn; $n = 63$), based on their reported secondary social media platform. Separate regression models were estimated for each group.

For visually oriented platform users, the model was significant ($R^2 = .278$, adjusted $R^2 = .263$). Consumption was the dominant predictor ($\beta = .357, t = 4.444, p < .001$), contribution was significant ($\beta = .205, t = 2.338, p = .021$), and creation was nonsignificant ($\beta = .133, t = 1.615, p = .108$). For text-oriented platform users, the model explained substantially more variance ($R^2 = .449$, adjusted $R^2 = .421$). The pattern reversed: consumption was nonsignificant ($\beta = -.252, t = -1.639, p = .107$), while contribution ($\beta = .503, t = 3.342, p = .001$) and creation ($\beta = .367, t = 2.985, p = .004$) were the dominant predictors.

An interaction model confirmed that the platform type moderation was statistically significant. The consumption by platform interaction was significant ($\beta = .609, t = 3.565, p < .001$), indicating that consumption's influence on purchase intention was significantly stronger on visual platforms than on text-oriented platforms. H6 was therefore supported: the COBE hierarchy operates differently across platform types, with passive consumption driving purchase intention on visual platforms and active contribution and creation driving purchase intention on text-oriented platforms. This moderation effect was further supported by subgroup regression results across platform types. Table 4 summarises all hypothesis testing results, and Figure 2 presents the tested model with standardised path coefficients.

Table 4. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hyp.	Path	β	t	p	Result
H1a	FCC → Consumption	.519	8.970	< .001	Supported
H1b	FCC → Contribution	.320	4.394	< .001	Supported
H2a	UGC → Consumption	.582	9.123	< .001	Supported
H2b	UGC → Creation	.228	2.556	.011	Supported
H3	Consumption → PI	.227	3.087	.002	Supported
H4	Contribution → PI	.239	3.071	.002	Supported
H5	Creation → PI	.205	2.892	.004	Supported
H6	Platform moderates COBE → PI	.609	3.565	< .001	Supported

Note. β values for H1a–H2b from simple regression; H3–H5 from simultaneous COBE model. H6 is tested using an interaction term (Consumption \times Platform Type) and supported by subgroup regression analysis.

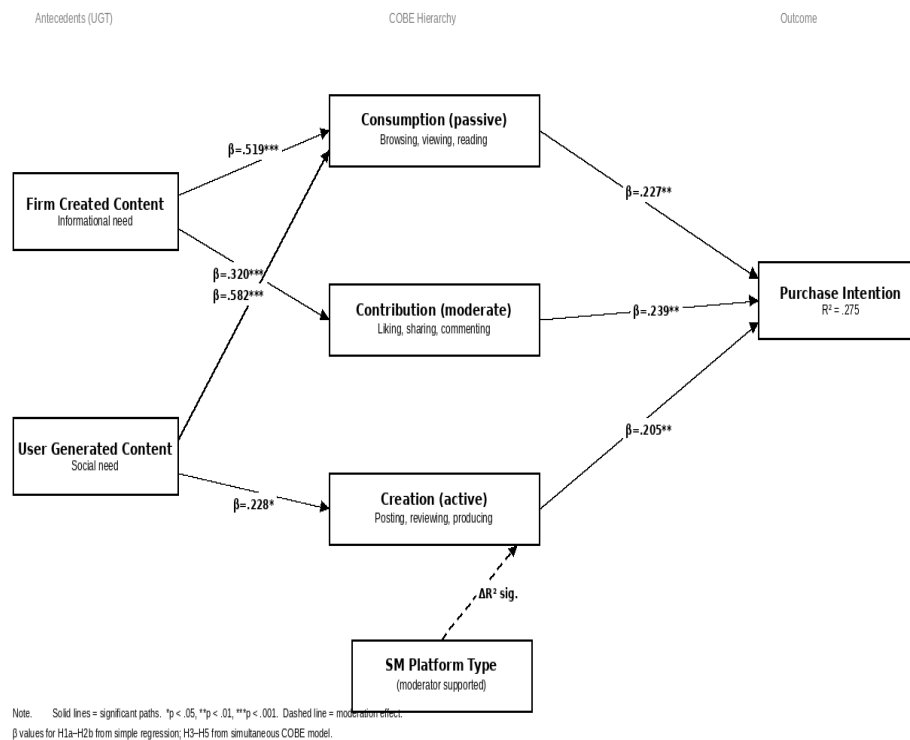


Figure 2. Tested Model with Standardised Path Coefficients

DISCUSSION

The current work has investigated the hypothesis of whether brand engagement by consumers online is a hierarchical behavioural construct in the description of luxurious purchase intention in young consumers in Ghana. In general, the results validate the perspective that the levels of engagement vary in the importance of behaviour, but the trend is less straightforward than a mere dichotomy between passive and active engagement. All three levels of engagement were important in the simultaneous purchase intention model. The addition of the content antecedents, however, resulted in a lack of significance in consumption, with contribution and creation becoming significant. This shows that passive engagement retains part of the explanatory value, but that more robust explanatory value is obtained when the

broader model is considered, i.e., higher-order engagement behaviours.

The Hierarchical Logic of COBE in an African Context

The results are equivocal in their support of the hierarchical logic of COBE within an African context of luxury consumption. In line with Poirier et al. (2024), it was observed that the more active levels of engagement were rated as more important in behavioural terms compared with passive consumption when the bigger picture was taken into account. Nevertheless, the findings also reveal that consumption cannot be considered an irrelevant factor. It was an important predictor in the simultaneous engagement model, and it was only insignificant when content antecedents were present. It is implied that passive exposure is still in the engagement

pathway, but the explanatory power of passive exposure is again undermined by considering upstream content factors and active behaviours.

It is a continuation of earlier research in that it demonstrates that the hierarchy is not merely a measure of stronger vs. weaker effects. Rather, it is a stratified process whereby a lower order engagement can be a point of entry, and contribution and creation have stronger behavioural implications for purchase intention. This meaning can also be applicable in the luxury context, whereby, in many instances, symbolic consumption commences with observation and aspiration, but where the behavioural meaning is more meaningful when consumers actively engage with, or create, brand-related content publicly.

Content Antecedents: FCC and UGC as Engagement Drivers

The antecedent findings are generally in line with the Uses and Gratifications argument that the various sources of content direct consumers towards various directions of engagement. Content developed by the firm was predictive of consumption and contribution, which implies that official brand communication is still crucial in getting attention and eliciting a moderate response. The generation of content by users predicted consumption and production, which agrees with the notion that peer-generated content can decrease the distance between consumer and producer (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024). The UGC to creation effect was, however, statistically significant though substantively low with low explained variance. Peer content by itself may not be able to spur the production of original content on this scale. It might also require other factors that impact consumers into creation behaviour like identity expression, social reward, platform norms or perceived brand fit (Huang & Zhou, 2025). The outcomes do not mean that UGC necessarily produces a high level of creative involvement. Instead, they imply that UGC offers a single aspect of the channel by which consumers can be more engaged. This demands a more conditional concept of peer influence, in both practical and theoretical aspects, within the COBE framework.

Platform Contingent Engagement Dynamics

The platform analysis shows that the behavioural meaning of engagement is different in platform environments. The strongest predictor of purchase intention on platform that was visual oriented was consumption, whereas contribution and creation had stronger predictors on text oriented platform. It is a trend that an affordance-based view of engagement can explain. Visual platforms focus on the repetition of visuals of luxury as the core of the user experience, potentially reinforcing the persuasive effect of viewing and browsing. In comparison, more text-based or discussion-based platforms are more conscious of explicit interaction and contribution, and creation of deeper involvement are more pronounced marker of deeper involvement (Kumar et al., 2022). This outcome has to be regarded with a certain degree of skepticism. Text-oriented subgroup was significantly less in comparison with the visual subgroup, and the classification simplifies multi-platform use of complex patterns into a predominant platform category. Nevertheless, this result

is still analytically useful since it demonstrates that the same engagement behaviour can have varied behavioural implications across platform contexts, where it takes place.

CONCLUSION

This research explored online brand engagement as a hierarchical behavioural construct. It evaluated the relationship between consumer online brand engagement and luxury purchase intention among Generation Z and Millennial consumers in Ghana. The results show that there is no undifferentiated concept of engagement. Consumption, contribution, and creation are distinct levels of behaviour with varying predictive power for purchase intention. In simpler models, consumption was significant, but the more powerful contributions and creations emerged as content antecedents were added. The prediction of consumption and contribution was strongest with firm-created content, and user-generated content predicted consumption and creation. The platform analysis also revealed that consumption was more important on visual platforms than on textual ones, in terms of contribution and creation.

Theoretical Implications

The paper builds on the COBE literature by showing that a behavioural hierarchy offers more explanatory power than aggregate measures of engagement in an understudied Sub-Saharan African luxury setting. It also perfects and polishes Uses and Gratifications reasoning by demonstrating that firm and user content do not simply augment the volume of engagement, but determine the type of engagement that ensues. Lastly, the platform's findings support an affordance-sensitive perception of engagement, in which the significance and impact of the same behaviour differ across platform architectures.

Managerial Implications

The implications for managers are that the purpose of content strategy should be to drive activation at specific levels of engagement rather than maximising exposure in isolation. Firm-created content seems more appropriate for arousing attention and moderating interaction, whereas user-created content is more closely linked to motivating creation behaviour. Managers, too, need to match tactics to platform type: visual platforms benefit from strengthening consumption pathways, while text-oriented platforms need to be intentionally facilitated through prompts, community governance, and mechanisms that reward visible participation.

Limitations and Future Research

The research has limitations due to its cross-sectional nature, which limits causal inferences and the use of self-reported measures, which can be subject to common-method bias despite diagnostic tests. The sample is urban, based in Accra and may not reflect rural or national trends in luxury participation. Future studies must adopt longitudinal or experimental methods to test the causal pathways, expand sampling to other Sub-Saharan markets besides Accra, and include data on behavioural platforms to confirm self-reported engagement. Other moderators that should be tested further to better understand when contribution and creation have the strongest translation

into purchase intention are income, materialism and brand familiarity.

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