IMPACT OF DIGITAL CONTENT MARKETING ON PURCHASE INTENTIONS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING POST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the effect of digital marketing content from the perspective of User and Gratification Theory (UGT) by E commerce companies within India on purchase intentions as mediated by customer's engagement. This research is an empirical study conducted by studying a sample of 200 respondents collected post Covid-19 lockdown in Gujarat who have experience of shopping online on various e commerce websites. The result of the study stated that digital content marketing has a significant impact on customer engagement and purchase intentions. Hence the content created by various companies need to focus on content which attracts customers and build a long term customer engagement.

Keywords: User and Gratification theory, Customer engagement, Digital Content Marketing, E-commerce

INTRODUCTION:

Current era has changed the traditional marketing strategies to digital marketing strategies. This transformation highlights the importance of service providers over internet via websites. Post Covid-19 pandemic, physical distancing need has forced while consumer shop online. There has been sharp rise in e commerce shopping. Also consumers are trying new brands resulting into shattering of brand loyalty. During and post pandemic interest in online shopping increased significantly (Ali Taha et al., 2021). The contactless shopping process made e-commerce the first choice for people when shopping. Demand spiked in categories such as groceries, home office essentials like laptops and headphones, furniture, consumer electronics products, health and fitness products, household products, personal grooming products. There are various other factors or drivers which motivate the customers for online shopping. Limited movement among people, COVID-19 fear, rapid growth of mobile devices, and scarcity of products in physical stores, Convenience and Time saving and Digital transformation of local kirana shops are the main drivers of online buying post COVID-19. (Aggrawal and Kapoor, 2020).

Today's consumers need entertaining and informative experiences while they shop online. This highlights the need of creating engaging digital content and management of customer's digital experiences. Customers need to be provided with entertaining and informative online shopping experiences throughout the process (Lim & Ting, 2012). Digital Content Marketing (DCM) is used to build long term relationship and customer engagement while advertising is primarily targeted at sales. DCM is very significant while considering how customers view information as advertising or as a marketing communication activity. This will result into long term relationships which further would encourage more customer involvement.

UGT is user and gratification theory which explains how consumers are motivated and their attitude formation towards social media content. UGT has been used previously by various researchers to discuss and measure digital content marketing (Hollebeek & Macky,2019). UGT explores the motives which drives people to search on social media sites (Flormorton, 2020). Researchers have also used UGT to examine customer's motivation to follow brands on social media. It has been widely used to understand the gratifications that individual obtain from media and technology.

Previous researchers have done significant study in the area of DCM and its effect on purchase intentions. Yet most of these studies are in western context and therefore this research aims to explore the DCM's impact on PI as mediated by customer engagement in Indian Context post Covid -19 pandemic. There has been progress in evaluating significance of DCM in consumer behaviour. Nevertheless, DCM research in the area of E commerce website in Indian context has been scarce.

This study assumes that UGT could help to explain young adult motivation and attitude towards online shopping through E commerce Website in Indian Context. Such motivation and positive attitude shall result into positive

purchase intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT:

UGT is approach to understand why and how people actively seek specific media to satisfy specific needs. It gives understanding of mass communication and how people deliberately select media that satisfies their needs. UGT is a theory in context of communication on social media introduced by Katz et al. (1974). It refers to various gratifications/benefits that attracts and hold users to different media and content to fulfil their needs. Researchers have incorporated UGT to measure the motivations behind using the different traditional media like newspaper, telephones, radios, etc. Recently, it has been widely used to explore new media and communication technologies such as SNS. The UGT indicators used in this study are entertainment and information seeking gratification.

ENTERTAINMENT GRATIFICATION

In the study by Kim & Foesythe (2007) it was found that online shoppers while shopping on digital platforms have a strong desire for entertainment pleasures. Hence the website that are able to provide higher entertainment values can motivate customers to use it more often. Entertainment and enjoyment were found to be the most significant reason for peoples favourable attitude towards websites and hence their actions of visiting the website again. Also Shavitt et al (1998) in their work have concluded that entertainment play the greatest role in getting desired attitude towards online shopping sites. Hence it was proposed that

H1: Entertainment gratification has a significant positive impact on customer engagement while shopping online
H2: EG has significant effect on purchase intentions while shopping online

INFORMATION SEEKING GRATIFICATION

It is the extent to which web media provides meaningful and helpful information to the customers. Maddox (1998) in his study has suggested that most important reason for people to go online is to gather information. Also the quality of information on a company's website directly influences customer's perception and attitude towards the site. Previous studies have collectively found a substantial positive association between information gratification and attitude of customers (Ducoffe, 1995; Maddox 1998; Lim & Ting, 2012). Hence it is proposed that

H3: Information Seeking Gratification has a significant impact on customer engagement while shopping online
H4: Information Seeking Gratification has significant effect on purchase intentions while shopping online

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

Customer Engagement is a process of belief, feeling and behaviour (Hollebeek, 2011). Purchase intentions refer to person's willingness to purchase product/service which further helps to predict the actual buying behaviour. Many researchers have proved significant positive impact of customer engagement on purchase intentions in digital marketing (Algharabat, 2018). Also customer engagement has a mediating effect on purchase intentions. Further, customer engagement is influenced by content created by various websites and will have impact on level of engagement on basis of customers perception and motivation. As suggested by theory of planned Behaviour, higher the intentions of purchase, more positive it results in actual purchase. Azam et al (..) argued that engaging customer has a positive association with purchase intentions. Hence it is proposed that

H5: Customer Engagement has a positive effect on Purchase Intentions
H6: Customer Engagement has a positive mediating role on the effect of entertainment gratification on purchase intentions
H7: Customer Engagement has a positive mediating role in the effect of informative seeking gratification on purchase intentions
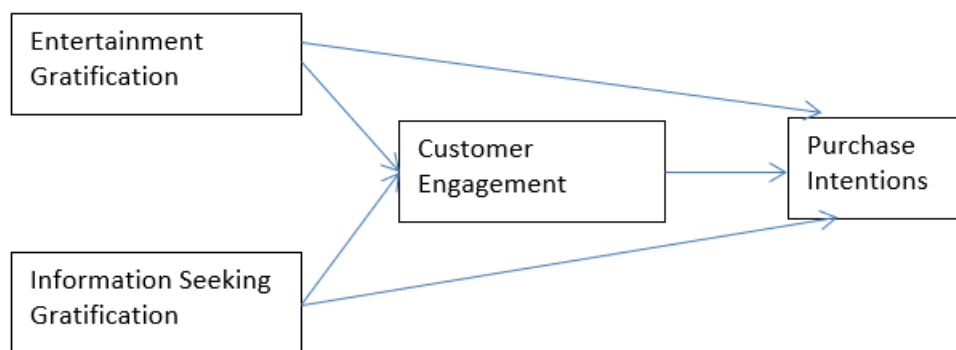
Figure 1: Conceptual Research Model

METHODOLOGY:

The objective of this research was to examine UGT based digital marketing content impact on customer engagement and purchase intentions. To achieve this objective, a cross sectional study with young adults (Age-20-24) from India with online shopping experiences was conducted. The young adults were selected for the study due to their increasing online shopping activity post Covid-19 Pandemic and increasing use of digital platforms by this age group people. This study used a quantitative approach and collected primary data from 200 respondents using online structured questionnaire. The independent and dependent construct were adopted from previous validated researches like Entertainment Gratification and Information Seeking Gratification (Annga Febrian et al., 2021), Customer engagement (Molehill et al., 2020), and Purchase Intention (Chiu, Kim, Won, 2018). The opinion of respondent was collected on a 5 point liker scale.

Data was analysed using SPSS 25. The questionnaire was reviewed by team of two experts from academics and industry to ensure face validity. Reliability of the constructs was measured using Cronbach's alpha. A seen in Table 1 below all variables exceeded the threshold value of 0.70 (Hair, 2017). Hence we ensure reliability criteria in this study.

Table 1 Construct Reliability

Construct	No. of items (Source)	Cronbach's Alpha
Entertainment Gratification	5	.876
Information Gratification	4	.839
Customer Engagement	6	.827
Purchase Intention	6	.791

The respondents profile indicated that 55.7 % were male and 44.3 % females. Majority of the respondents belong to the age group of below 25. 97.4% respondents were of the age group under 25 and 2.6 % was age group of 25-40. While considering their level of education, 80.9% respondents were pursuing post graduate courses and 19.1 % had pursuing their graduation. The respondents gave their preferences for ecommerce websites in raking order from 1 to 4 which are Amazon India, Flipkart, Myntra and Nykaa. The product category ranked in order of 1 to 3 as given by respondents was apparels followed by electronics ad cosmetics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Examination of the study hypotheses was performed by regression analysis in SPSS 25. The effect of Entertainment gratification on Customer Engagement while shopping online was measured by regression analysis.

Regression Analysis of Entertainment Gratification on Customer Engagement

Linear regression analysis was used to calculate the effect of Entertainment Gratification on Customer Engagement and the results are summarized in Table 2

Table 2 Model Summary

Model Summaryb						
Model	R	R	Adjusted R	Std. Error	Change Statistics	Durbin-

		Square	Square	of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Watson
1	.748ᵃ	.560	.553	.454	.560	76.386	1	60	.000	2.038
a. Predictors: (Constant), EG										
b. Dependent Variable: CE										

Coefficientsᵃ								
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1.255	.282		4.447	.000	.691	1.820
	EG	.638	.073	.748	8.740	.000	.492	.784
IG a. Dependent Variable: CE								

The results show that the predictors of the CE explains .748 of the variance F =76.3, p=0< 0.05. Here R-square value shows that 56% variance in Customer Engagement can be predicted from Entertainment Gratification. Moreover, Customer Engagement is getting significantly influence by Entertainment Gratification (ß = .748, p <.05). Hence we accept H1

H1: Entertainment gratification has a significant positive impact on customer engagement while shopping online

Regression Analysis of Entertainment Gratification on Purchase Intention:

Linear regression analysis is used to calculate the effect of Entertainment Gratification on Purchase Intention and the results are summarized in Table 3

Table 3: Model Summary

Model Summaryᵇ										
				Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
		R Square	Adjusted R Square		R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
Model	R									
1	.662ᵃ	.438	.429	.482	.438	46.759	1	60	.000	1.876
a. Predictors: (Constant), EG										
b. Dependent Variable: PI										

Coefficientsᵃ								
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1.857	.300		6.197	.000	1.258	2.456
	EG	.530	.077	.662	6.838	.000	.375	.685
a. Dependent Variable: PI								

The results show that the predictors of the PI explains .662 of the variance F =75.4, p=0< 0.05. Here R-square value shows that 43.8% variance in Customer Purchase Intention can be predicted from Entertainment Gratification. Moreover, Customer Purchase Intention is getting significantly influence by Entertainment Gratification (ß = .662, p <.05). Hence we accept H2.

H2: Entertainment Gratification has significant effect on purchase intentions while shopping online

Regression Information Seeking Gratification and Customer Engagement:

Linear regression analysis is used to calculate the effect of information seeking Gratification on Customer Engagement and the results are summarized in Table 4

Table 4: Model Summary

Model Summaryᵇ										
				Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
		R Square	Adjusted R Square		R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
Model	R									

| 1 | .547[a] | .299 | .288 | .573 | .299 | 25.634 | 1 | 60 | .000 | 2.089 |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), IG |
| b. Dependent Variable: CE |

Coefficients[a]								
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1.858	.365		5.085	.000	1.127	2.589
	IG	.461	.091	.547	5.063	.000	.279	.643
a. Dependent Variable: CE								

The results show that the predictors of the CE explains .547 of the variance F =25.63, p=0< 0.05. Here R-square value shows that 51.5 % variance in CE can be predicted from IG. Moreover, CE is getting significantly influence by IG (ß = .547, p <.05). Hence we accept H3

H3: Information seeking gratification has a significant impact on customer engagement while shopping online

Regression of Information Seeking Gratification and Purchase Intention:

Linear regression analysis is used to calculate the effect of Information Seeking Gratification on Customer Engagement and the results are summarized in Table 5

Table 5: Model Summary

Model Summary[b]										
		R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
Model	R				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.594[a]	.353	.343	.517	.353	32.790	1	60	.000	2.027
a. Predictors: (Constant), IG										
b. Dependent Variable: PI										

Coefficients[a]								
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	2.013	.330		6.107	.000	1.354	2.672
	IG	.470	.082	.594	5.726	.000	.306	.635
a. Dependent Variable: PI								

The results show that the predictors of the IG explains .594 of the variance F =32.79, p=0< 0.05. Here R-square value shows that 35.3 % variance in PI can be predicted from IG. Moreover, PI is getting significantly influence by IG (ß = .547, p <.05). Hence we accept the hypothesis H4

H4: Information Seeking Gratification has significant effect on purchase intentions while shopping online

Regression Analysis of Customer Engagement on Purchase Intention:

Linear regression analysis is used to calculate the effect of Customer Engagement on Purchase Intention and the results are summarized in Table 6

Table 6: Model Summary

Model Summary[b]										
		R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
Model	R				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.718[a]	.515	.507	.448	.515	63.715	1	60	.000	1.914
a. Predictors: (Constant), CE										
b. Dependent Variable: PI										

Coefficients[a]								

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1.389	.315		4.408	.000	.759	2.019
	CE	.674	.084	.718	7.982	.000	.505	.843
a. Dependent Variable: PI								

The results show that the predictors of the PI explains .718 of the variance F =63.7, p=0< 0.05. Here R-square value shows that 51.5 % variance in PI can be predicted from CE. Moreover, PI is getting significantly influence by CE (ß = .718, p <.05). Thus we accept the hypothesis H5
H5: Customer Engagement has a positive effect on Purchase Intentions

MEDIATION EFFECT OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENTERTAINMENT GRATIFICATION AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

Baron and Kenny (1986) mentioned a method which included four-step approach. Primarily, the path among the independent variable and dependent variable must be significant. Next, the path among the independent variable and mediator should be significant. Subsequently, the path among the mediator and the dependent variable should also be significant. Lastly, the path among the independent and dependent variable should be significantly reduced when the mediator is added.

As specified in Table 3 Entertainment Gratification is notably related to the purchase intention, satisfying the initial condition. Secondly, Table 2 is specifying the effect of EG has a significant relationship with CE, implying that the second condition is met. Additionally, as specified in Table 6 the customers purchase intention also has a significant relationship with consumer engagement so fulfilling the third situation also. And the final fourth step is to include the mediator consumer engagement into the model so as to examine whether it reduces the effect. Lastly the result of mediating effect of CE on effect of EG and PI is significant. R square value is increased to 0.55. It is specified in Table 8 that the beta value of predictor EG reduces from 0.662 to 0.284, so the results specify that consumer engagement act as a partial mediator and that supported H6

H6: Customer Engagement has a positive mediating role on the effect of entertainment gratification on purchase intentions

Table 7 Correlations between EG, CE, PI

Correlations				
		EG	CE	PI
EG	Pearson Correlation	1	.748**	.662**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	63	62	62
CE	Pearson Correlation	.748**	1	.718**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	62	62	62
PI	Pearson Correlation	.662**	.718**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	62	62	62
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Table 8 Model Summary

Model Summary^b										
				Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.742^a	.550	.535	.435	.550	36.111	2	59	.000	1.913
a. Predictors: (Constant), CE, EG										
b. Dependent Variable: PI										

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1.261	.312		4.046	.000	.637	1.885
	EG	.227	.105	.284	2.154	.035	.016	.438
	CE	.475	.124	.505	3.840	.000	.227	.722
a. Dependent Variable: PI								

MEDIATION EFFECT OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFORMATION SEEKING GRATIFICATION AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

As specified in Table 5 Information Gratification is notably related to the purchase intention, satisfying the initial condition. Secondly, Table 4 is specifying the effect of Information Gratification has a significant relationship with Customer Engagement, implying that the second condition is met. Additionally, as specified in Table 6 the customers purchase intention also has a significant relationship with consumer engagement so fulfilling the third situation also. And the final fourth step is to include the mediator consumer engagement into the model so as to examine whether it reduces the effect. Lastly the result of mediating effect of CE on effect of Information Gratification and Purchase Intention is significant. R square value is increased to 0.57. It is specified in Table 9 that the beta value of predictor Information Gratification reduces from 0.594 to 0.288, so the results specify that consumer engagement act as a partial mediator and that supported H7

H7: Customer engagement has a positive mediating role in the effect of informative seeking gratification on purchase intentions

Table 8 Correlation between PI, IG, CE

Correlations

		PI	IG	CE
Pearson Correlation	PI	1.000	.594	.718
	IG	.594	1.000	.547
	CE	.718	.547	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	PI	.	.000	.000
	IG	.000	.	.000
	CE	.000	.000	.
N	PI	62	62	62
	IG	62	62	62
	CE	62	62	62

Table 9 Model Summary

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.757^a	.573	.559	.424	.573	39.610	2	59	.000	2.010
a. Predictors: (Constant), CE, IG										
b. Dependent Variable: PI										

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1.036	.323		3.206	.002	.389	1.682

IG	.228	.080	.288	2.835	.006	.067	.389
CE	.526	.095	.560	5.511	.000	.335	.717
a. Dependent Variable: PI							

This paper aimed to explore the impact of entertainment gratification n information seeking gratification on Purchase intentions while shopping online on various ecommerce websites in India. In the regression analyses, the researcher examined the significance of the both dimensions of digital content marketing separately on dependent variables i.e. customer engagement and purchase intentions. Also mediation analysis was performed to find out mediating effect of customer engagement on effect of independent variables on purchase intentions of the customers. The mediator provides evidence about why or how digital marketing content and purchase intentions are interrelated.

The study findings revealed that entertainment gratification has a significant and positive effect on purchase intentions and customer engagement which supports H1 and H2. This finding is in line with the works of Lee et al. (2013), who found a positive and significant association between entertaining content and customer engagement. Social media content can be considered entertaining when it appeals person's emotion. Also information seeking gratification had a significant impact on purchase intentions and customer engagement which supports H3 and H4. This finding is in line with the works of Maddox (1998), who found a positive and significant association between information and customer usage of internet. Also the study by Lee at al., (2013) has demonstrated the relationship between informative content and engagement behaviour.

Customer engagement has forming dimensions like vigor, dedication, and absorption. Customer engagement, therefore, focuses on providing long-term customer satisfaction and intimacy through the provision of superior values, experiences, and products compared to other competitors (Sashi, 2012). Customer engagement must be towards the building of trust and commitment. The theoretical construction of customer engagement points to the fact that attachment, loyalty, and trust are notable customer engagement outcomes, which impact purchase intention (Chen & Xu, 2019; Price Addo et al., 2021). The study gives similar results which states that in online shopping customer engagement of young respondents would significantly positively impact their purchase intentions. Hence we accept the hypothesis H5.

Additionally, Angga Febrian et al., (2021) proposed in their study that customer engagement had indirect effect seen from the relationship between two exogenous variables. They proposed in their research that customer engagement based on UGT dimensions has a mediating effect on relationship between DCM and customer intentions. The empirical study gives result similar to the existing literature and hence H6 and H7 are accepted.

THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Digital Content marketing is a very significant marketing strategy post covid 19 pandemic to build long term relationship with customers. This study has analysed two significant dimensions of UGT by integrating customer engagement as a mediator and study the impact of entertainment gratification and information seeking gratification on purchase intentions. This provides understanding of customer behaviour while shopping online. It provides understanding how DCM content affects customers while online shopping and contributes towards literature on online buying behaviour in Indian Context.

Today's young customers are willing to seek interesting and entertaining content and are taking initiative to search for information regarding products and services (Yi Bu et al., 2020). For marketers it will be helpful to understand what young customers are primarily looking at. E commerce websites need to pay attention at content quality they create for engaging customers. This includes sourcing most significant and latest information which is informative and entertaining. The results give understanding in Indian context how marketers can facilitate engaging interaction with the target audiences. Digital content should be concise and interesting to engage customers for longer duration (Kwahk and Kim, 2017). The websites can enhance the purchase intentions towards goods purchased virtually so as the entertainment and informative gratification of the customers are satisfied.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

The research explored motivations of young adults towards online shopping. The empirical finding reveals information and entertainment to be significant motivators resulting in purchase intentions while shopping online. The study employed quantitative approach which was conducted a single point of time. A mix method exploratory study would yield better results. The study was considered in Indian context so cannot be generalized for economies with different culture and demographics. Future research might consider other dimensions of Digital

Content Marketing based on UGT.

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