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Impact of use & gratification theory and user generated content on purchase intention

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Abstract---Content Marketing is a marketing strategy which attracts, engages and retains an audience by creating and sharing relevant articles, videos, podcasts and other media. It also creates, publishes and distributes content for customers through online channel in order to induce their purchase intention. The major focus is on the content created by the marketer to attract the customers. This study uses 'Use and Gratification Theory' and 'User Generated content' to determine 'Customer Engagement' and 'Purchase Intention' of customers. The objectives of the study are to analyze the relationship among Use and Gratification factors, User Generated Content, Customer Engagement and Purchase Intention and to test whether Customer Engagement has a mediating effect between Use and gratification factors and User Generated Content (Independent Variable) and Purchase Intention (Dependent Variable). This study uses primary data to collect the information about digital content marketing through a standardized questionnaire focusing on Use and Gratification factors, User Generated Content, Customer Engagement and Purchase Intention.

Keywords---content marketing, use and gratification theory, user generated content, customer engagement, purchase intention, audio-video, podcasts.

Introduction

With the advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Internet has become part and parcel of our everyday life and many traditional offline activities have been shifted to online activities. The current digital era has changed the marketing style from offline (traditional) to online. Digital marketing

means the component of marketing that uses Internet and online based digital technologies such as desktop computers, mobile phones and other digital media and platforms to promote products and services. Digital marketing concept is considered as the right step in reaching the online consumer's market. Content marketing is one of the branches of digital marketing where it is a strategic approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract customers across online channels. The purpose of the content is to persuade customers into taking actions or to entice someone with valuable, engaging and relevant information. Traditionally content marketing was referred to as marketing communication, which was related to the delivery of information or messages to customers that might influence their behaviour. For digital content, marketing and product related communication is the information required by the customers. The use of content marketing is considered different from advertising which directly aims at sales, but digital content marketing aims at long term customer engagement. Use and Gratification theory and User Generated Content help to understand how digital contents attract customers which leads to enhanced customer engagement and stronger purchase intention. Use and Gratification theory is an approach to understand why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy special needs. It is an audience centric approach. User Generated Content is any form of content such as image, videos, text and audio that has been posted by users on online platforms such as social media which instigates customer engagement resulting in increased customer purchases while shopping online.

Review of Literature

Angga Febrian, Satria Bangsawan, Mahrinasari Ms, Ayi Ahadiat (2020) conducted a study on "Digital Content Marketing Strategy in Increasing Customer Engagement in Covid-19 Situation". The results of the study stated that the two theories of content marketing have a significant effect on customer engagement and purchase intentions as well as customer engagement plays a mediating role in the effect of digital content marketing on purchase intention. Companies can focus on content delivered through the website that is useful to attract customers to be involved in the product marketing process both intentionally and unintentionally. Future studies can be done by selecting a particular e-commerce website also.

Mukesh Agarwal (2020) conducted a study on "Importance of User Generated Content as a part of Social Media Marketing that drives Customer's Brand Awareness and Purchase Intentions". The findings of the study contributed towards understanding the value enhancing potential of social media campaigns and demonstrated how the perception of brands is influenced through this new communication channel. User-Generated Content (UGC) also helped to influence social connections. People are more likely to like a brand recommended by their friends, colleagues and family. Besides, UGC is a free marketing material that can be reused in further campaigns.

Xiaomeng ZHU (2018) conducted a study on "The Impact of content marketing on brand equity". The findings of the study revealed that customer perceived value played a complete mediating role between content marketing and brand equity.

This research enriched the literature on content marketing, customer perceived value and brand equity, and provided suggestions for the promotion of enterprise marketing and brand equity.

Azlin Zanariah Bahtar and Mazzini Muda (2015) examined “The Impact of User – Generated Content (UGC) on Product Reviews towards Online Purchasing – A Conceptual Framework”. This study aimed to understand how User Generated Content can influence Instagram users to purchase products promoted and reviewed on Instagram and the study proved that the content provided by unknown users influence one’s decision to purchase.

Jacques Richard Ludovic Froget, Abbas Ganbhari Baghestan and Yasha Sazmand Asfaranjan (2013) conducted a study on “Uses and Gratification Perspective on Social Media Usage and Online Marketing”. The author tried to identify the new areas of content marketing in the field of marketing communication and mass media. It contributed to the body of knowledge by identifying scientifically four predictors of Facebook use. The major findings of the study were that the level of income had a direct effect on the quantum of usage of Facebook. They suggested that future studies can be done using different motives that drive Facebook use.

Weng Marc Lim & Ding Hooi Ting (2012) conducted a study on “E-shopping: An Analysis of the Uses and Gratifications Theory”. The findings of the study provided a significant contribution in understanding the influence of Uses and Gratification Theory on consumer behaviour towards online shopping. They also suggested that future studies can be done by examining the Use and Gratification structure from a larger perspective, for specific products.

Need for the study

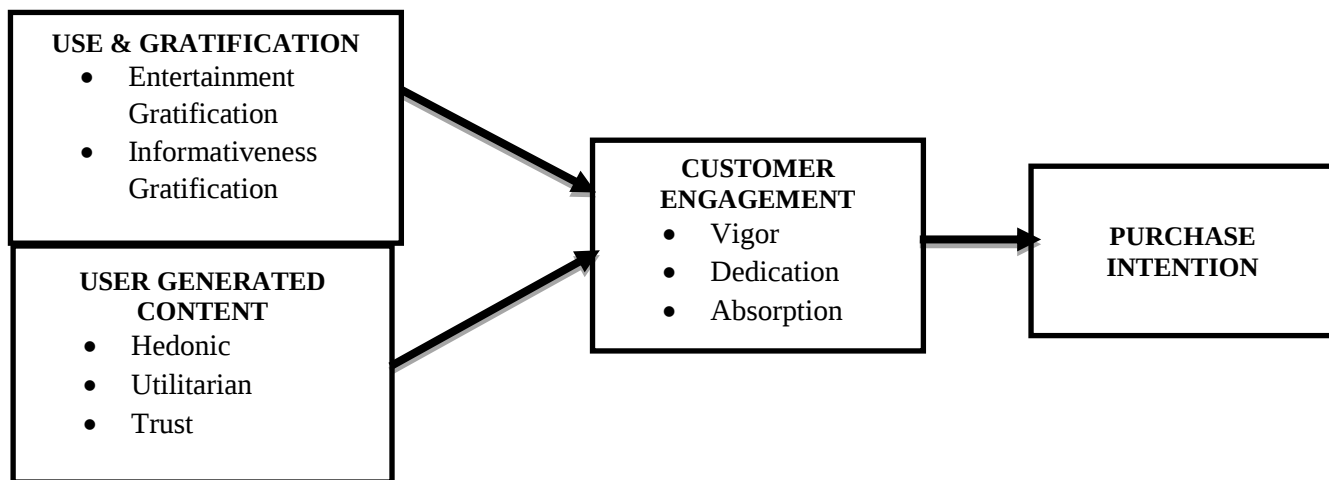
The proper development of the Content is essential to attract the customers to purchase the products or services through online shopping sites. The forms of Content differ in each website based on the online platforms used and target customers. Therefore, two important aspect of content marketing need to be studied i.e., the Use and Gratification factors which helps to understand from where customers gather the information about the product or services and User Generated Content which are the contents development by the original users of the product or services. For this content plays a major role, to influence the customers before and after use of the product or services. This led to the need for the study to recognize the usefulness of content marketing in the present competitive market, to study how and why customers interact with the online media and to determine their online shopping behaviour.

Research Model

Based on the Review of Literature, the Research Model adopted for the study is depicted below. This model consists of two prominent Independent Variables such as ‘Use and Gratification Theory’ and ‘User Generated Content’. The first independent variable ‘Use and Gratification Theory’ was taken from “E-shopping: An Analysis of the Uses and Gratification Theory (2012)”. Use and Gratification theory is customer centric approach which help us to understand the active participation of the customers towards online shopping sites. The second

independent variable 'User Generated Content' was taken from "Influence of user generated content in online shopping: impact of gender on purchase behaviour, trust and intention to purchase (2017)". User Generated Content is the content created by the customer after personally experiencing that particular product or service. Then the mediating variable, Customer Engagement was taken from "Digital Content Marketing Strategy in Increasing Customer Engagement in Covid 19 Situation (2020)" helps to know emotional connection between a customer and online shopping sites. Sobel test was conducted to find out whether there exists mediating effect between the independent and dependent variables. Customer Engagement showed a mediating effect. Finally, Purchase Intention was taken from "Factors affecting Online Purchase Intention: Effects of Technology and Social Commerce (2018)" was modified and used in the current study by the researcher. This is done to know how the content available in the online shopping sites are attracting and persuading the customer to purchase that particular product or services. The result showed that customers engage themselves with the online shopping sites because of the content available in these sites and that induces them to purchase the particular product or services. Thus, the below portrayed Content Marketing Model was developed by the researcher in this way.

Fig No. 1 Content Marketing Model



This conceptual model clearly depicts 'Use and Gratification' being an independent factor consists of two variables namely 'Entertainment Gratification' and 'Informativeness Gratification'. Use and Gratification helps to understand the customers active participation in online shopping sites to satisfy their special needs. Also, User Generated Content is another independent factor refers to any form of the content shared by the customers in online platforms such as social media. This factor consists of three variables namely Hedonic, Utilitarian and Trust. Thus Use and Gratification and User Generated Content are independent factors which impacts Customer Engagement which is the mediating variable, thereby resulting in Purchase Intention(dependent variable) of customers. Thus customers may purchase a particular product or service after reviewing all forms of content available in the online shopping sites.

Objectives of the study

- To analyse the relationships among Use and Gratification factors, User Generated Content and Customer Engagement and Purchase Intention of customers.
- To analyse the cause-effect relationship between Use and Gratification factors, User Generated Content and Customer Engagement with Purchase Intention.
- To test whether Customer Engagement acts as a mediator between the Independent Variables (Use and Gratification factors and User Generated Content) and Dependent Variable (Customer Engagement).

Research Methodology

Primary data was collected through an online survey conducted by circulating a standardized and structured questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale. Sample size consist of 150 respondents selected using purposive sampling technique since only respondents who had made online purchases forms the sample. The Cronbach's Alpha score for the study was 0.955 ensuring the reliability of the questionnaire.

Limitations

- The study was done exclusively among female students in Chennai city.
- The study was done from the customers perspective, retailers' perspective was ignored.

Analysis and Intrepretation

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

S.NO.	Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
	Gender		
1.	Female	150	100
	Total	150	100
	Age group (in years)		
1	Below 18	17	11
2	18 – 19	57	38
3	Above 19	76	51
	Total	150	100
	Educational Qualification		
1	Undergraduate	126	84
2	Postgraduate	24	16
	Total	150	100
	Monthly Family Income		
1	Less than Rs.25,000	68	45
2	Rs.25,000 – Rs.50,000	42	28

3	Above Rs.50,000	40	27
	Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data

Majority of the respondents are undergraduate (84%), belong to the age group of above 19 years (51%) and have a monthly family income of less than Rs.25,000 (45%). All the respondents are female students.

Table 2
Use and Gratification Factors, User Generated Content and Customer Engagement with Purchase Intention – Correlation Analysis

S.NO.	VARIABLES	r' value
1.	Entertainment Gratification with PI	0.637**
2.	Informativeness Gratification with PI	0.635**
3.	Hedonic with PI	0.530**
4.	Utilitarian with PI	0.509**
5.	Trust with PI	0.541**
6.	Vigor with PI	0.737**
7.	Dedication with PI	0.824**
8.	Absorption with PI	0.627**

Source: Primary Data

PI – Purchase Intention

** - Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The above Table shows that there exists a significant and positive relationship between Use and Gratification factors (Entertainment Gratification and Informativeness Gratification), User Generated Content (Hedonic, Utilitarian and Trust), Customer Engagement (Vigor, Dedication and Absorption) with Purchase Intention at 1% level of significance. Out of the above eight factors, Dedication ($r=0.824$) is highly correlated with Purchase Intention followed by Vigor ($r=0.737$), Entertainment Gratification ($r=0.637$), Informativeness Gratification ($r=0.635$), Absorption ($r=0.627$), Trust ($r=0.541$), Hedonic ($r=0.530$) and Utilitarian ($r=0.509$) because customers are enthusiastic about their shopping experience with the online shopping sites which has resulted in Dedication, (one of the variable of Customer Engagement) to highly correlated with Purchase Intention.

Table 3
Impact of Use and Gratification, User Generated Content and Customer Engagement on Purchase Intention – Regression Analysis Model Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square change	F-change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F	
1	0.87	0.762	0.748	0.305	0.762	56.354	8	14	0.00	2.060

3						1	0	
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Co-efficient

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficient	t	sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (constant)	0.144	0.201		0.720	0.473
EG	0.022	0.060	0.023	0.371	0.711
IG	0.222	0.063	0.205	3.510	0.001
HED	0.023	0.057	0.023	0.397	0.692
UTI	0.050	0.061	0.051	0.809	0.420
TRU	0.004	0.060	0.004	0.063	0.950
VIG	0.166	0.054	0.203	3.083	0.002
DED	0.404	0.071	0.452	5.657	0.000
ABS	0.077	0.053	0.086	1.449	0.150

Source: Primary Data

- a. Predictors: (constant), EG, IG, HED, UTI, TRU, VIG, DED, ABS
b. Dependent variable: Purchase Intention

The adjusted R square is 0.748 which indicates that, 74.8% of the amount of variance is explained in this study. The regression equation is $PI = 0.144 + 0.022 EG + 0.222 IG + 0.023 HED + 0.050 UTI + 0.004 TRU + 0.166 VIG + 0.404 DED + 0.077 ABS$. The above Table shows that out of the eight variables, Dedication ($\beta = 0.404$), Informativeness Gratification ($\beta = 0.222$) and Vigor ($\beta = 0.166$) have a significant impact on Purchase Intention at 1% level. This is because the customers find that the content provided in the online shopping sites are meaningful and attractive which induces them to purchase the particular product or services.

Mediation Analysis - SOBEL TEST

In order to find out whether Customer Engagement is a mediator between the independent variables (Use and Gratification and User Generated Content) and dependent variable (Purchase Intention), Regression analysis was first performed taking Use and Gratification and User Generated Content as the IV (Independent Variable) and Customer Engagement as the DV (Dependent Variable). The Unstandardized Regression coefficient for the association was 0.865 which was significant at 1% level. The results of which are depicted in Table No 4.1 below:

Table 4
Use and Gratification, User Generated Content and Customer Engagement – Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficient	t	sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (constant)	0.184	0.283		0.650	0.516
IV	0.865	0.074	0.692	11.650	0.000

- a. Dependent Variable: Customer Engagement
Source: Primary Data

In this step, Regression analysis was performed taking Use and Gratification, User Generated Content and Customer Engagement as the Independent Variables and Purchase Intention as the Dependent Variable. The Unstandardized Regression coefficient for the association was 0.619 which was significant at 1% level. The results of which are depicted in Table No 4.2 below:

Table 5
Use and Gratification, User Generated Content, Customer Engagement and
Purchase Intention– Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficient	t	sig	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (constant)	0.089	0.208		0.426	0.671		
IV	0.366	0.076	0.293	4.847	0.000	0.522	1.917
CE	0.619	0.060	0.619	10.245	0.000	0.522	1.917

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

Source: Primary Data

The values arrived at from the Regression analyses were as follows:

$$a = 0.865$$

$$s_a = 0.074$$

$$b = 0.619$$

$$s_b = 0.060$$

The results of the Sobel test revealed that p value = 0. The p -value is equal to the alpha value of 0.05, which shows that the mediation effect is significant. It is concluded that Customer Engagement acts as a Mediator between the Independent Variable (Use and Gratification and User Generated Content) and the Dependent Variable (Purchase Intention), which means that Customers get attracted towards the various forms of the content available about any product or service and engage themselves in purchasing that particular product or service through online shopping sites.

Conclusion

The theories of content marketing are Use and Gratification and User Generated Content which have a significant effect on customer engagement and purchase intention based on the results of the study. The correlation analysis shows that Dedication which is one of the variables of Customer Engagement is significantly and positively correlated with the Purchase Intention (Dependent Variable). The regression analysis shows that the same variable Dedication has a significant impact on Purchase Intention, which strengthens the analysis of the study as consistent. Mediation Analysis through Sobel Test also revealed that Customer Engagement is a significant mediator between the Independent and Dependent factors. The overall result of the study indicates purchase intention of the customers in online shopping sites because of the content available about that

particular product or service. Thus, the content available about a particular product or service in the online shopping sites plays a major role in the decision-making process of the customers. Hence the marketer should focus on the content created about a particular product or service in order to increase the customer traffic in their sites

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