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# The impact of digital content marketing in shaping consumer decision-making for tech gadget purchase

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## **Abstract**

Digital content marketing is vital in shaping consumer behavior, particularly within the tech gadget industry. This study investigates how content marketing strategies, content preferences, social media usage and consumer engagement influence purchasing decisions. Data was collected using the mall intercept method from 215 respondents at Al Seeb City Center Mall in Muscat, Oman. The findings reveal that consumers prefer engaging and accurate content, which builds trust in products. Reviews are more influential than blogs and emails, as the latter often contain sponsored content. Many consumers still value first-hand in-store experiences, especially for significant, infrequent purchases like tech gadgets. YouTube and Instagram exhibit higher consumer engagement on social media than Twitter and Facebook. The methodology includes an estimated equation where decision-making (DSM) is modeled as a function of content marketing strategies (CMS), consumer engagement with content (CEC), content preference (CP), and social media (SM). Regression analysis indicates that content marketing strategies are less significant than content engagement and quality, which build trust and drive consumers toward purchasing decisions. These findings underscore the importance of strategic content marketing and emphasize the need for marketers to focus on creating trustworthy and engaging content to influence consumer decisions in the tech gadget market effectively.

**Keywords:** Digital Content Marketing Strategies; Consumer Engagement; Content Preferences; Social Media Interactions

## 1. Introduction

The rapid evolution of the internet has transformed marketing into the dynamic field of digital marketing. Since the 1980s, notable events such as the emergence of personal computers and social media have catalyzed this shift. Consequently, traditional marketing principles like the four Ps (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) have undergone significant changes, with companies adopting diverse business models. Since 2019, there has been a substantial increase in internet users, especially on mobile devices and social media platforms, presenting new opportunities for global audience engagement. Global trade is experiencing a resurgence, with growth rates expected to reach 2.6% in 2024 and increase to 3.3% in 2025 (WTO Publications, 2024). Bill Gates timeless quote from 1996 still holds the significance: "Content is king" (Gates, 1996). However, the emphasis now lies on understanding content effectiveness and how it engages consumers to drive purchase decision-making (Müller & Christandl, 2019). Content marketing involves strategically creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a specific target audience, aiming to drive profitable customer action within this audience (Pulizzi & Barrett, 2009). As businesses embrace digitalization to bolster their online branding efforts, content marketing has emerged as a fundamental component of marketing strategies. Marketing is now understood as an art of influence, focusing on identifying touchpoints where customers are most receptive. The traditional "funnel" approach, guiding customers from a broad

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range of options to final purchase, is challenged by the well-informed nature of customers and the proliferation of digital channels.

The customer journey is more complex than a simple funnel, influenced by various marketing efforts. The "messy middle" concept recognizes this complexity, acknowledging that the path to purchase is non-linear and varies per individual (Belsky, 2018). The "messy middle" describes the complex, non-linear consumer decision-making process where consumers repeatedly loop between exploring options and evaluating information before purchasing. This concept highlights the need for consistent, valuable content across various touchpoints to guide consumers through their journey. Companies adapt to these dynamics by leveraging AI to analyze consumer data, optimize marketing strategies, and offer personalized solutions, thus redefining marketing approaches. This is observed in the study conducted by (Mishra & Varshney, 2024), emphasizing digital transformation and its impact on sales, margins, and customer behavior, highlighting the strategic advantages of increased efficiency and profitability. Content marketing is pervasive in modern business strategies, spanning owned and earned media channels. Companies engage audiences with valuable content through platforms like websites and social media. This approach extends to SEO efforts, inbound marketing, lead generation, and customer education. Leveraging storytelling and social media, content marketing fosters lasting connections with consumers, guiding them through the customer journey and reinforcing brand loyalty in a crowded marketplace. Content marketing involves creating and sharing valuable content related to a brand with customers, job seekers, employees, investors, and other target groups. The content is distributed through digital platforms to achieve strategic business objectives (Koob, 2021a). In today's digital world, the increasing use of the internet and online tools has led to new business opportunities. Small business owners can now utilize digital platforms like social media to reach customers and promote their products or services. Digital marketing, which includes strategies like content marketing, is becoming popular among small businesses. Social media marketing is a crucial tool in the marketing function. Its versatility makes it worthwhile for brand managers to build a digital presence and share information about the brand through messages, videos, reviews, blogs, and so on. Therefore, this research explores the impact of digital content marketing strategy, consumer content engagement, content preference, and social media on the consumer's decision-making towards tech gadget purchases.

#### 2. Literature Review

Success in content marketing centers on a clear strategy and the visibility of high-quality content on platforms preferred by the audience (Koob, 2021b). With search engine algorithms constantly evolving, creating engaging, trustworthy content is crucial. Compelling content is critical to customer engagement and enhancing a company's reputation. Rowley (2008) outlines the characteristics of digital content, emphasizing its informational nature and dual role as both a marketing tool and a product. (Pulizzi and Barrett 2009) stress the importance of leveraging technology to gather customer information and provide valuable content to aid in informed purchasing decisions. Content marketing (CM) comprises three main components: content, customer engagement, and goals, along with four CM measurement types: consumption, sharing, lead generation, and sales (Rancati & Gordini, 2014). Consumption measurements gauge the audience reach, sharing metrics reflect content dissemination, lead generation measures the conversion of audiences to leads, and sales metrics quantify the impact of CM on sales. Trust is a critical factor in the decision-making process. Consumers are more likely to trust and engage with content perceived as credible, which significantly influences their purchasing behavior (Ye et al., 2011). Positive reviews from credible sources enhance consumer trust and foster longterm brand loyalty. Online product reviews, valued for their perceived honesty and impartiality, greatly influence consumer purchasing behaviors by providing authentic assessments of product quality and satisfaction (Li et al., 2020). In social media marketing, platforms like Instagram offer unique opportunities for brand engagement. Instagram's visual-centric format and digital filters provide a captivating user experience, making it a potent tool for e-commerce marketing. The platform's ability to engage users surpasses that of older social media platforms, making it increasingly significant in corporate marketing strategies (Divakaran & Xiong, 2022; Singh, 2020).

### 3. Theoretical framework

The Dual Process Theory, also known as the Dual Systems Theory or Dual Process Model, is a psychological framework that suggests individuals have two distinct modes of cognitive processing: System 1 and System 2 (Thompson, 2014). System 1 is fast and automatic, relying on shortcuts and feelings to make quick decisions, while System 2 is slow and deliberate, using logic and analysis for complex problems. These systems work together, with System 2 stepping in to correct System 1 when necessary. (Stanovich & West, 2000). The Dual Process Theory (DPT) provides a valuable framework for understanding decision-making processes, particularly in content engagement, marketing strategies, and consumer decision-making. According to DPT, individuals utilize these two modes of cognitive processing to navigate their decisions. System 1 operates automatically and intuitively, while System 2 functions deliberatively and

analytically. In the context of this research, respondents may initially rely on System 1 thinking for content engagement and decision-making, driven by intuitive and emotional responses to content, such as Content Marketing Strategies, Consumer Engagement with Content, Content Preference, and social media. However, they may employ System 2 thinking to evaluate the content critically. Applying the Dual Process Theory to the research model, this study explores how individual's cognitive processes influence their decision-making regarding digital content marketing strategies, consumer engagement, content preferences, and social media interactions for tech gadget purchases. This approach offers insights into the interplay between intuitive and analytical thinking in shaping consumer decision-making behavior, informing effective content creation and persuasion strategies in the tech gadget market.

# 4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework explores how digital content marketing influences consumer decision-making for tech gadget purchases, integrating content marketing strategies, consumer engagement, content preferences, and social media interactions. Effective content marketing involves creating valuable content that engages audiences and builds trust, leveraging technology to aid informed decisions. (Koob, 2021b; Pulizzi, 2012; Pulizzi & Barrett, 2009; Rowley, 2008). High engagement, measured through likes, shares, and comments, shows content's impact on purchasing behavior. (Ye et al., 2011). Engaging content triggers quick, intuitive decisions (System 1), while significant purchases require more deliberate analysis (System 2). Preferred content types, such as credible reviews, strongly influence consumer trust and decisions (Li et al., 2020). Social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube are crucial in sharing content and driving engagement. Instagram's visual appeal and high engagement rates make it particularly effective for marketing. (Singh, 2020). The Dual Process Theory (DPT) explains cognitive processes in decision-making, with System 1 being fast and intuitive and System 2 slow and analytical. (Stanovich & West, 1998; Thompson, 2014). Initially, consumers rely on System 1 for quick responses, then use System 2 for deeper evaluation. Based on the literature review study, the hypotheses are as follows:

- Ho1: Content marketing strategies do not significantly affect the decision-making of tech gadget purchases.
- Ho2: Consumer engagement with content in tech gadget purchases does not significantly affect decisionmaking.
- Ho3: Content preference in tech gadget purchases does not significantly affect decision-making.
- Ho4: Social media in tech gadget purchases do not significantly affect decision-making.

Fig.1 highlights how interconnected content marketing elements influence consumer decisions, guiding marketers in creating content that effectively engages and informs consumers throughout their purchasing journey.

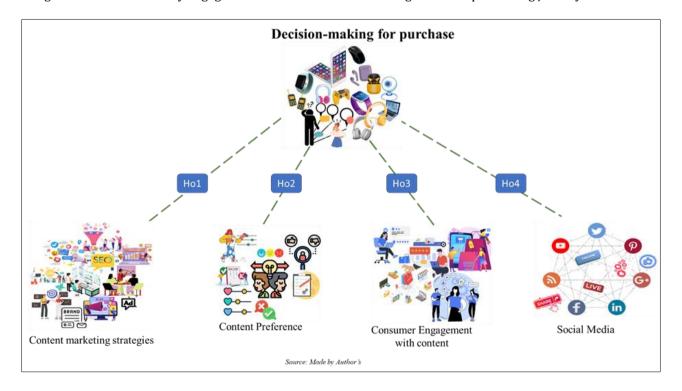


Figure 1 Conceptual Model

#### 5. Research Methods

#### 5.1. Methodology

A pilot survey was conducted among 25 Omani residents to assess the tech gadget-purchasing habits of individuals; the survey aimed to observe the frequency of tech gadget purchases. For the sample size calculation the Topman formula was applied to determine the sample size needed for the survey, Aiming for a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. (Corbetta, 2003) The formula utilized is as follows:

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times p \times (1 - p)}{E^2}$$

Where:

n =required sample size

p = estimated population proportion (based on pilot survey results)

E = margin of error

Given that 85% of respondents from the pilot survey reported regularly purchasing gadgets, p was set to 0.85. With a desired margin of error of 5%, E was set to 0.05. Substituting these values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.85 \times (1 - 0.85)}{0.05^2}$$
$$n \approx 195$$

After rounding it up, a sample size of approximately 200 respondents would be necessary to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error for estimating the proportion of individuals in Al Seeb, Oman, who purchase tech gadgets influenced by content marketing strategy, social media, content preference, and content engagement. The data collection resulted in 225 responses; by discarding 10, we have used 215 responses collected in the Al Seeb region in Oman. The questionnaire was a structured instrument, validated for content validity before administration, and its reliability was confirmed using Cronbach coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ). These responses ensure that the study accurately reflects the respondent's decision-making towards purchasing tech gadgets. To examine the determinant factors that influence decision-making, an estimated equation reflects decision-making as a function of the following variables.

Decision Making = (DSM)
Content Marketing Strategies = (CMS)
Consumer Engagement with content = (CEC)
Content Preference = (CP)
Social media = (SM)

$$DSM(Y) = \beta 0 + \beta 1CMS + \beta 2CEC + \beta 3CP + \beta 4SM + e$$
 -----(2)

Here, Y is the dependent variable,  $\beta 0$  is the intercept,  $\beta i$  (i = 1, 2, 3, 4) represents the coefficient for each independent variable (all measured by questions ranked by the Likert scale), and e is an error of margin that is (5%)

## 5.2. Reliability Test

It is recommended and significant to explain the Cronbach coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ), as highlighted by (Taber, 2018). So, in this study, Cronbach's coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) was used to measure the reliability and internal consistency of the items included in the questionnaires. Results of the reliability analysis showed that the items in the five scales had a satisfactory discriminating power, excluding one that is social media. Regarding the lower value, it is stated that Alpha's acceptability is not tied to a specific threshold like 0.70, as argued by (Schmitt, 1996) and (Sijtsma, 2009). They suggest that even low alpha values can be helpful in specific contexts. Recent insights emphasize that low and high alpha values can align with unidimensional or multidimensional data structures. So, considering this, Social Media constructs are used to test further.

Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients

S.N	Research construct	No. of items	Coefficients
1	Decision Making (DSM)	4	0.726
2	Content Marketing Strategies (CMS)	4	0.710
3	Consumer Engagement with content (CEC)	4	0.751
4	Content Preference (CP)	4	0.713
5	Social media (SM)	3	0.609
		19	

Source: Author Analysis through SPSS29, 2024

#### 6. Results and Discussion

We distributed 250 copies and received 225, of which 215 were used, with a response rate of 95.5%. Some copies were discarded because they were not correctly filled out and missed parts of the questionnaire.

#### 6.1. Multicollinearity Test

**Table 2** Result of Multicollinearity Test using Tolerance and VIF

Variables	Collinearity Statistics				
	Tolerance	VIF			
CMS	0.526	1.900			
CEC	0.679	1.474			
СР	0.499	2.005			
SM	0.588	1.700			

a: Dependent Variable: DSM; Source: Author Analysis through SPSS29, 2024

Liu, 2017) Multicollinearity occurs in multiple linear regression when independent variables exhibit high correlation, causing some variables to become statistically insignificant, even though they may have substantive effects on the dependent variable. (Lesaffre & Marx, 1993) The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) gauges how much the variance of a regression coefficient inflates when independent variables are correlated. It is calculated as the reciprocal of the tolerance. A low tolerance implies high multicollinearity. VIF of [1] suggests no correlation, [1-5] indicates moderate, [5-10] signals high correlation, and [over 10] signifies severe multicollinearity. So, as per the rule, tolerance should not be less than 0.1, and VIF should not be more than 5. In Table 2: the collinearity statistics reveal varying levels of multicollinearity among the variables. For instance, the CMS variable exhibits a tolerance of 0.526, corresponding to a VIF of approximately 1.900, suggesting a moderate correlation. Similarly, the CEC variable displays a tolerance of 0.679 and a VIF of approximately 1.474, indicating a moderate correlation. The CP variable shows a tolerance of 0.499 and a VIF of approximately 2.005, indicating a relatively higher correlation. Lastly, the SM variable demonstrates a tolerance of 0.588 and a VIF of approximately 1.700, indicating moderate correlation.

Table 3 Correlation matrix results for multicollinearity

		CMS	CEC	СР	SM
CMS	Pearson Correlation	1	0.506**	0.619**	0.556**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<0.001	<0.001	< 0.001
	N	215	215	215	215
CEC	Pearson Correlation	0.506**	1	0.507**	0.411**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001		<0.001	<0.001

	N	215	215	215	215
CP	Pearson Correlation	0.619**	0.507**	1	0.591**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	<0.001		<0.001
	N	215	215	215	215
SM	Pearson Correlation	0.556**	0.411**	0.591**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	
	N	215	215	215	215

<sup>\*\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); Source: Author Analysis through SPSS29, 2024

(Shrestha, 2021) Pearson's correlation coefficient helps to check the collinearity of independent variables. Table 3: shows the correlation analysis between the decision-making and other factors, resulting in a moderate positive and significant correlation at p < 0.001. The correlation coefficient of overall content marketing strategies with the variable content preference has a moderate correlation (r = 0.619, p < 0.01), followed by social media (r = 0.556, p < 0.01) and consumer engagement with content (r = 0.506, p < 0.01). (De Vaus, 2002) Here, the absolute value of the Pearson correlation coefficient is less than 0.8, which shows that multicollinearity is very unlikely to exist.

## 6.2. Testing Hypotheses

- Ho1: Content marketing strategies in tech gadget purchases do not significantly affect decision-making.
- Ho2: Consumer engagement with content in tech gadget purchases does not significantly affect decision-making.
- Ho3: Content preference in tech gadget purchases does not significantly affect decision-making.
- Ho4: Social media in tech gadget purchases do not significantly affect decision-making.

Table 4 Model summary of the effect of Content Marketing on the decision-making of tech gadgets

	Model	R		Adjusted R Std. Error of the Estimate							Durbin-
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Watson	
	1	0.666a	0.444	0.434	0.45358	0.444	41.959	4	210	<0.001	2.116

a. Predictors: (Constant), SM, CEC, CMS, CP; b: Dependent Variable: DSM; Source: Author Analysis through SPSS29, 2024

**Table 5** ANOVA of the effect of Content Marketing on the decision-making of tech gadgets

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	34.530	4	8.632	41.959	<0.001b
	Residual	43.204	210	0.206		
	Total	77.734	214			

a. Dependent Variable: DSM; c: Predictors: (Constant), Social, CEC, CMS, CP; Source: Author Analysis through SPSS29, 2024

Regression analysis is more applicable in the decision-making survey because it helps identify the factors influencing the decision-making of tech gadget purchases. In Table 4, the multiple correlation coefficient between the independent variables and the outcome variable, decision-making, is r = 0.666, showing a positive correlation between the variables. The  $R^2 = 0.444$  shows that the independent variables can explain 44.4% of the movement in the dependent variable. The adjusted  $R^2 = 0.434$  shows how well the model generalizes. The difference between the  $R^2$  and adjusted  $R^2$  is 0.444-0.434=0.01; if the model were derived from the population rather than a sample, it would account for approximately 1% less variance in the outcome. This suggests that the model fits the sample well and would perform similarly with the broader population. The F-value of ANOVA Table 5: measures the statistical significance of the model. Here, the F-value (41.959, p < 0.05) can be observed that the outputs from the analysis are not due to chance alone, and the independent variable appropriately depicts the changes in the dependent variable. Table 6: The regression coefficient

shows how much the dependent variable's decision-making is expected to increase when the predictor variable under consideration increases by one and all other independent variables are held at the same value.

Table 6 Coefficient Model summary of the effect of Content Marketing on the decision-making of tech gadgets

Model		Unstandar	dized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		В	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.994	0.254		3.917	<0.001
	CMS	0.042	0.067	0.044	0.622	0.535
	CEC	0.266	0.065	0.256	4.106	< 0.001
	СР	0.356	0.064	0.406	5.574	<0.001
	SM	0.081	0.062	0.088	1.306	0.193

a: Dependent Variable: DSM; Source: Author Analysis through SPSS29, 2024

#### 6.3. Test of the hypotheses

Ho1: Content marketing strategies in tech gadget purchases do not significantly affect decision-making.

#### 6.3.1. Result

The Content Marketing Strategy (CMS) coefficient is 0.042, with a significance level of 0.535. Since the p-value is more significant than 0.05 (assuming a significance level of 0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis (Ho1). This suggests that content marketing strategies in technology and gadget purchases do not significantly affect decision-making.

Ho2: Consumer engagement with content in tech gadget purchase does not significantly affect decision-making.

#### 6.3.2. Result

The Consumer Engagement with Content (CEC) coefficient is 0.266, with a significance level of less than 0.001. With a very low p-value, we reject the null hypothesis (Ho2). This indicates consumer engagement with content in technology and gadget purchases significantly affects decision-making.

Ho3: Content preference in tech gadget purchases does not significantly affect decision-making.

## 6.3.3. Result

The coefficient for Content Preference (CP) is 0.356, with a significance level of less than 0.001. The low p-value leads us to reject the null hypothesis (Ho3), suggesting that content preference in technology and gadget purchases significantly affects decision-making.

Ho4: Social media in tech gadget purchases do not significantly affect decision-making.

## 6.3.4. Result

The coefficient for social media (SM) is 0.081, with a significance level of 0.193. Since the p-value is more significant than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (Ho4). This indicates that social media in technology and gadget purchases does not significantly affect decision-making.

So, the regression result will conclude that Content marketing strategies and social media do not significantly affect decision-making. The lower value of the Cronbach coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ) for social media assures that it does not fit the model. Consumer engagement with content and content preference do have significant effects on decision-making.

## 7. Conclusion and Practical Implications

This study underscores the critical role digital content marketing plays in shaping consumer decision-making for tech gadget purchases. It integrates key elements such as content marketing strategies, consumer engagement, content preferences, and social media interactions. Effective content marketing involves creating valuable, engaging, and

trustworthy content and leveraging technology to aid informed decisions. High engagement levels, indicated by likes, shares, and comments, reflect the content's resonance with consumers and its influence on their purchasing behavior. Preferred content types, like credible reviews, are crucial in building consumer trust and informing their decisions. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram and YouTube, are effective in content dissemination and consumer engagement, with Instagram's visual-centric format proving incredibly impactful for e-commerce marketing. The Dual Process Theory (DPT) elucidates cognitive processes in decision-making, showing how consumers initially rely on System 1 for quick, intuitive responses to engaging content and later engage System 2 for more deliberate analysis of significant purchases. The hypotheses tested the significance of content marketing strategies, consumer engagement, content preferences, and social media on decision-making. Results suggest that while all these elements are interconnected, their influence varies, with content preferences and consumer engagement having a more substantial impact. For marketers, this study provides actionable insights. Focusing on creating high-quality, engaging, and trustworthy content is essential. Content should capture initial interest through engaging visuals and emotionally resonant messages (System 1) and provide detailed, credible information to support thoughtful decision-making (System 2). Leveraging technology to gather and analyze consumer data helps adapt content to specific preferences, enhancing relevance and trust. Marketers should prioritize platforms like Instagram and YouTube for their high engagement rates and visual appeal, ensuring content is optimized for these channels to maximize impact. Paying close attention to consumer engagement metrics is crucial for gauging content effectiveness and adjusting strategies accordingly. Understanding that consumers value credible reviews, efforts should be made to encourage and highlight authentic user reviews to build trust and influence purchasing decisions. By integrating these strategies, marketers can more effectively navigate the complex, non-linear consumer journey, guiding consumers from initial interest to final purchase. This comprehensive approach ensures that modification in digital content marketing attracts and convinces consumers, driving successful tech gadget purchases.

## Limitations and Scope for Further Research

This study focuses on the direct impact of digital content marketing on consumer decision-making for tech gadgets, but it has limitations. One significant limitation is the potential influence of false comments, which can distort consumer perceptions and trust. The study did not extensively explore AI's role in addressing these issues. Future research should investigate AI's role as a mediating variable in content marketing for tech gadgets. AI's machine learning, data mining, and natural language processing capabilities can enhance targeting, personalization, and content distribution. By analyzing consumer data, AI can improve content effectiveness and engagement. It can also optimize content delivery on platforms like Instagram and YouTube, providing personalized recommendations that boost consumer trust and satisfaction. Further studies should examine AI's impact on content curation, SEO strategies, and conversion rates to understand its potential to revolutionize content marketing strategies for tech gadgets. This will offer valuable insights into how AI can enhance content marketing effectiveness and consumer decision-making.

## Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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