

Journal of Technology Management for Growing **Economies**



Journal homepage: https://tmg.chitkara.edu.in/

Navigating Consumer Engagement: A Bibliometric Study of Content Marketing Research

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: 11 March, 2024 Revised: 30 May, 2024 Accepted: 27 September, 2024 Published Online: 25 October, 2024

Keywords: Content marketing, Consumer engagement, Systematic Literature Review, VOSviewer



DOI: 10.15415/jtmge/2024.152004

1. Introduction

ABSTRACT

Background: This Study explores the critical role of content strategy in fostering consumer engagement across digital platforms.

Purpose: By examining various approaches to content marketing, we highlight best practises that enhance audience interaction and brand loyalty.

Methods: This research provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of content marketing. using a dataset of 106 articles chosen using the PRISMA technique using Scopus analysed by VOSviewer.

Results: In addition to highlighting the most cited authors and countries that have contributed to the literature, our analysis uses keyword co-occurrence to outline four important research clusters: Digital Rights in E-Commerce, Engaging Audiences through social media and Digital Marketing, Engagement through Facebook Digital Content and Strategic Content for consumer engagement.

Conclusion: This study not only maps the current state of digital content marketing research but also provides actionable insights for scholars and practitioners aiming to enhance and explore new dimensions of this evolving sector.

The use of social media and the internet is increasing worldwide, according to Perrin (2015) and Smart Insights (2021). Out of the 7.8 billion people on the planet, 4.20 billion were active users of social media as of January 2021, making up around 53.6% of the total population. According to Smart Insights (2021), this represented a 13.2% rise in the number of active social media users from January 2020. Scholars and practitioners of marketing have shown a considerable interest in customer engagement over the last ten years, according to Harmeling et al. (2017). The quantity of Google search results for "customer engagement" rose dramatically from zero in 2007 to over 690 million on April 7, 2021, according to their observation (Harmeling et al., 2017). Additionally, Chua and Banerjee (2013) and Abdul-Ghani et al. (2011) posited that customer engagement is not a new idea in the marketing domain; the emergence of the internet and social media has forced businesses, regardless of their conventional brick-andmortar operations, to reconsider and adjust their approaches to customer engagement in the online space. The online

consumer activity boom, according to Constantinides et al. (2008), has opened up new opportunities for customer involvement on the internet. Simultaneously, as social media continues to develop, consumers' roles have changed from being primarily passive information "receivers" to active information co-creators (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). The introduction of social media and the internet has changed the way that consumers interact with each other and with business representatives. Customer attention has become a precious commodity in this scenario, making it harder to achieve engagement (Hu & Krishen, 2019; Li, 2017). As a result, businesses must not only attract customers but also create a community that encourages continued interaction and sustains that attention (Riley, 2020).

Historically, marketers have focused on places where their target consumer segments congregate, like driving, watching television, and reading newspapers. They have used these venues to spread marketing messages about their goods and services among circles of influence in the community (Abernethy & Franke, 1996; Dickson & Ginter, 1987; Van Waterschoot & Van den Bulte, 1992). Customized approaches to consumer outreach have included buying commercial airtime on television (Lodish et al., 1995), putting ads in newspapers (Picard, 2008), sending out direct mail coupons (Bawa, 1996; Bawa & Shoemaker, 1989), and obtaining billboards on highways (Bhargava et al., 1993; Wilson, 1941). However, a sizable amount of the funds and attention traditionally allotted to marketing is now being used for social media platform advertising (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Sweeney, 2019). The fact that 90% of firms use social media to raise brand awareness and that advertising spending is expected to reach over \$93 billion in 2019 are indicators of this shift in marketing investment (Newberry, 2019). Given social media's wide reach and the growing recognition of businesses as a viable platform for allocating resources like time and money, industry practitioners and academic literature alike face a fundamental challenge: maintaining customer engagement (Riley, 2020).

This review paper aims to illuminate the complexities of content marketing strategies aimed at enhancing consumer engagement. Through an extensive analysis of existing research, we identified 106 relevant articles from the Scopus database using a targeted Boolean search technique.

This study includes an analysis of key themes, geographic trends, and influential publications in the field of content marketing. By investigating the theoretical foundations of consumer engagement through content, we present descriptive findings, including collaborative networks among countries and a detailed keyword analysis. To deepen the contemporary research topics and trends, we concluded a thorough review of the literature and performed bibliometric analysis of the selected articles. The objectives of this study are:

- 1. To identify and analyze key themes in content marketing research.
- 2. Explore geographic distribution and collaboration patterns in the literature.
- 3. Highlight influential contributions to consumer engagement strategies.

This review ultimately seeks to provide valuable insights for practitioners and researchers aiming to optimize content marketing initiatives for improved consumer loyalty and interaction.

2. Literature Review

Creating outstanding customer engagement, according to a number of marketing strategists, is essential to business success (Cravens *et al.* 1997; Higgins 1998; Huber 2001; Porter 1996; Reichheld *et al.* 2000).

2.1. Content Marketing

The Content Marketing Institute (CMI)'s Pulizzi (2010) coined the term "content marketing," which is not new

but is still developing. It has been difficult to define content marketing because the environment affects how it is understood. In an effort to increase awareness of their businesses, marketers are progressively switching from interruptive advertising to content marketing (Du Plessis 2015; Zahay 2014).

According to Koiso-Kanttila (2004), digital content marketing refers to the promotion of goods whose distribution and entity are entirely digital; this type of digital content is becoming a more and more significant component of the economic environment. The reason content marketing works so well is that it uses subtle "pull" strategies instead of pushy "push" strategies to get people to interact with brand material (Liu & Huang, 2015). Moreover, it integrates relationship marketing, integrated marketing communication, and marketing communications theories (Cronin, 2016). Content marketing, in contrast to traditional product or service advertising, concentrates on branding through the creation and distribution of pertinent and worthwhile content to draw in and involve the target audience. Brand stories are created and disseminated by practitioners on the internet to acquaint the public with the brand (Brieger, 2013). Furthermore, according to Du Plessis (2015) and Holliman & Rowley (2014), content marketing is frequently compared to publishing, native advertising, inbound marketing, and storytelling. While content marketing can utilize traditional formats such as customer magazines and brochures, the digital landscape has popularized the term, leading many authors to associate "content marketing" primarily with digital formats (Handley & Chapman, 2011; Rose & Pulizzi, 2011; Wuebben, 2011). According to Chaffey & Smith (2013), the most frequently used formats of digital content include images, videos and animations, e-books or shorter customer guides, white papers, podcasts, webinars, infographics, blog posts, and social media updates. After reviewing the idea of digital content marketing, Hollebeek & Macky (2019) determined four essential features that set it apart from traditional advertising. First, according to Holliman and Rowley (2014), content marketing is a company's or brand's genuine commitment to add value for prospective clients by offering pertinent or cost-free material. Secondly, the approach prioritizes establishing enduring connections with customers instead of overtly pushing for prompt sales (Ahmad et al., 2016). Third, unlike brands that push material onto customers, content marketing depends on consumers actively seeking out useful brand content (Deighton & Kornfeld 2009). Lastly, digital content marketing "earns" its audience by providing products that are worthwhile or gratifying, in contrast to "paid" advertising (Nagy & Midha 2014).

2.2. Consumer Engagement

A major finding of Schultz and Peltier (2013) is that the idea of consumer engagement is difficult to describe and understand, which emphasizes the need for researchers and marketers to develop a more precise definition, conceptual framework, and operationalization of this relationship strength metric. As an example, they cite brand loyalty, relationship marketing, concentric marketing, marketing orientation, customer relationship management, and social networks as relational constructs that can be used to understand engagement. Customer-brand engagement is defined as "a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions" in a consumer setting by Hollebeek *et al.* (2014).

It is believed that "customer engagement" is a "psychological process" including both emotional and cognitive elements. According to Bowden's (2009) model, customer happiness is the starting point for an iterative process that leads to customer loyalty at the end. This path to loyalty includes involvement, trust, and customer satisfaction in addition to affective and calculative commitment. "Affective commitment," which pertains to returning customers and indicates a more emotional foundation for repurchase, is primarily significant to repeat customers, whereas "calculative commitment" is mostly cognitive in nature. On the other hand, Van Doorn et al. (2010) and Pham and Avnet (2009) center their attention on "customer engagement behaviors," primarily characterizing engagement in relation to particular kinds or patterns of customer behavior. Furthermore, the Marketing Science Institute (2010) recognizes that consumer involvement can have a lasting impact in both pre- and post-purchase scenarios.

3. Methodology

Our selection of a bibliometric approach entails the application of quantitative approaches for the purpose of analyzing bibliometric data. Unlike more conventional systematic literature assessments, bibliometric reviews seek to offer insights into a broad range of issues typified by significant volumes of bibliometric data (Zupic & Cater, 2015).

Co-citation analysis is one of the most used bibliometric techniques for literature analysis (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). The bibliometric approach used in this study (Garcia-Lillo *et al.*, 2018) shows the degree of proximity between papers and defines the linkages between research units. When two articles are referenced in a third publication, this is known as co-citation (Walter & Ribiere, 2013). This analytical

method is used to pinpoint new research trends and characterize the long-term scholarly structure of a certain subject. Co-citation analysis has been used in this study to illustrate the most recent developments in the field of customer engagement within digital marketing research and to map the vast academic framework associated with this issue (Lopes *et al.*, 2021).

The next method used to get the information from literature is co-occurrence analysis with keywords. Using a network map of co-occurring terms, this approach establishes thematic clusters as the fundamental components of the study field. "The frequency with which a keyword appears alongside other keywords" is the definition of co-occurrence (Siddiqi & Sharan, 2015). The co-occurrences of important terms—those used by researchers as well as those found in article titles or complete texts—are examined in this study (Bornmann *et al.*, 2018). These co-occurrences show the conceptual connections that experts in the subject believe exist. Using cluster and network analysis approaches, a co-word frequency matrix is built to provide a co-word map that illustrates the domain's intellectual landscape, including cognitive themes and their relationships (Cho, 2014).

3.1. Search Strategy

The search query was performed by Advanced Search. In order to study the concept of customer engagement within digital marketing, literature was considered from various databases. In order to get the appropriate articles for the said areas, Boolean OR/AND operators were used. The databases used for the purpose are Scopus and Google Scholar. The strategy also involves getting up-to-date detailed publications; the timeframe is from 2000 to 2021, and articles were taken from Scopus. In addition to this, articles in English were included simultaneously, excluding book chapters and conference papers. By using a combination of keywords like content marketing, digital content, and customer engagement, articles were searched. The following search string was used to locate the articles:

3.2. Search String

(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Content marketing" OR "Content creation" OR "Digital Content" OR "Content Strategy") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Consumer Engagement" OR "Brand Awareness" OR "Consumer Loyalty" OR 'Sales") AND PUBYEAR > 1999 AND PUBYEAR < 2022 AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOCI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) A total of 106 articles were chosen for the systematic literature review to investigate the idea of customer involvement in digital marketing after the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. In order to facilitate deeper insights from the available literature, the "Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Meta-Analyses" (PRISMA) framework was employed. This framework offers an organized method for outlining the bases for inclusion and exclusion. Figure 1 shows the PRISMA Framework.

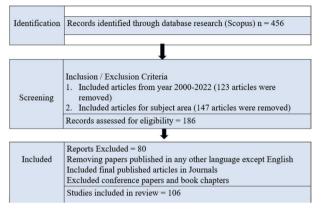


Figure 1: PRISMA Framework

3.3 Year-Wise Published Documents

Following the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 106 studies were taken after each paper's full-text scanning was completed. Figure 2 depicts how the studies were distributed across time. The graph illustrates how, between 2001 and 2011, the publication of customer engagement in digital marketing was slow; after 2011, the count increased gradually. With thirty research articles published, 2021 had the largest number of publications. There were only ten studies published in 2020, and 15 articles were published in 2019. This distribution demonstrates the year-over-year growth in customer engagement with content marketing.

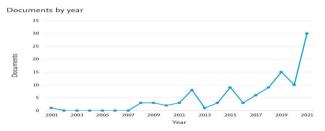
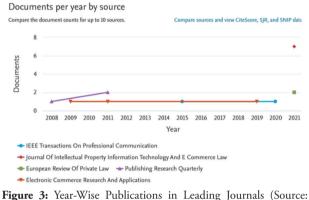


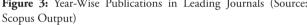
Figure 2: Documents per Year (Source: Scopus Output)

3.4. Articles in Leading Journals

Figure 3 depicts the publications in leading journals in context to the subject area. On the top with 7 publications is Journal of Intellectual Property Information Technology and

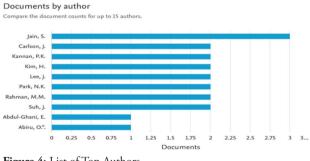
E-Commerce Law; second is Electronic Commerce Research and Applications along with Publishing Research. Quarterly, both have 3 publications each. European Review of Private Law, IEEE Transactions on Professional Communications, and Industrial Marketing Management: these three with 2 publications each stood third. As more scholars engage by contributing, we can expect a rich continuation of the dialogue in the context of content marketing.

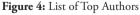




3.5. Top Authors with Number of Publications

The data (Figure 4) reveals Jain S. as the leading author in this research area, contributing three significant publications. Close behind are Carlson, J.; Kannan, P.K.; Kim, H.; Lee, J.; Park, N.K.; and Rahman, M.M., each with two publications, showcasing a strong community of scholars. This collective effort not only enhances the body of knowledge but also sets the stage for future research collaborations and advancements in the field.





3.6. List of Top Cited Articles

The top 20 articles with the highest citation details are shown in Table 1. Diwedi *et al.* are on the top with the highest citations of 883, followed by Hollebeek *et al.* with 425 citations. The top 7 articles have more than 100 citations in their respective contributed articles to the area of research.

S.No	Author (Year)	Title	Source	Citations
1	Dwivedi <i>et al.</i> , 2021	Setting The Future of Digital and Social Media Marketing Research: Perspectives and Research Propositions	International Journal of Information Management	883
2	Hollebeek & Macky, 2019	Digital Content Marketing's Role in Fostering Consumer Engagement, Trust, and Value: Framework, Fundamental Propositions, and Implications	Journal of Interactive Marketing	425
3	Sabate <i>et al</i> ., 2014	Factors Influencing Popularity of Branded Content in Facebook Fan Pages	European Management Journal	389
4	Hajli & Sims, 2015	Social Commerce: The Transfer of Power from Sellers to Buyers	Technological Forecasting and Social Change	238
5	Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016	Harnessing Marketing Automation for B2B Content Marketing	Industrial Marketing Management	218
6	Danaher <i>et al.</i> , 2010	Converting Pirates without Cannibalizing Purchasers: The Impact of Digital Distribution on Physical Sales and Internet Piracy	Marketing Science	142
7	Geng <i>et al</i> ., 2020	Content Marketing in E-Commerce Platforms in the Internet Celebrity Economy	Industrial Management and Data Systems	110
8	Moran <i>et al.</i> , 2020	Message Content Features and Social Media Engagement: Evidence from the Media Industry	Journal of Product and Brand Management	81
9	Kupfer <i>et al.</i> , 2018	The Role of the Partner Brand's Social Media Power in Brand Alliances	Journal of Marketing	75
10	Kannan <i>et al.</i> , 2009	Pricing Digital Content Product Lines: A Model and Application for the National Academies Press	Marketing Science	75
11	Wang <i>et al.</i> , 2019	B2B Content Marketing for Professional Services: In-Person Versus Digital Contacts	Industrial Marketing Management	73
12	Xu & Schrier, 2019	Hierarchical Effects of Website Aesthetics on Customers' Intention to Book on Hospitality Sharing Economy Platforms	Electronic Commerce Research and Applications	62
13	Annamalai <i>et al.</i> , 2021	Social Media Content Strategy for Sport Clubs to Drive Fan Engagement	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	62
14	Bowden & Mirzaei, 2020	Consumer Engagement within Retail Communication Channels: An Examination of Online Brand Communities and Digital Content Marketing Initiatives	European Journal of Marketing	61

Table 1: List of Documents and Authors with Highest Citations

15	Tiwary <i>et al</i> ., 2021	Impact Assessment of Social Media Usage in B2B Marketing: A Review of the Literature and A Way Forward	Journal of Business Research	56
16	Li <i>et al</i> ., 2019	Optimal Design of Free Samples for Digital Products and Services	Journal of Marketing Research	50
17	Hodis <i>et al.</i> , 2015	Interact With Me On My Terms: A Four Segment Facebook Engagement Framework for Marketers	Journal of Marketing Management	50
18	Carlson <i>et al</i> ., 2021	Engaging Gen Y Customers in Online Brand Communities: A Cross-National Assessment	International Journal of Information Management	50
19	Menon <i>et al.</i> , 2019	How to Grow Brand Post Engagement on Facebook and Twitter for Airlines? An Empirical Investigation of Design And Content Factors	Journal of Air Transport Management	46
20	Ghose & Ipeirotis, 2009	The EconoMining Project at NYU: Studying The Economic Value of User-Generated Content on the Internet	Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management	42

3.7. Documents Published by Territory or Country

Figure 5 showcased the list of Countries contributed in the area of research on the top being United States with 33 publications, followed by United Kingdom with 12 publications. Later, Germany (10), South Korea (6), and China (5).

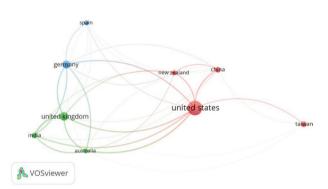


Figure 5: List of Countries/Territory

3.8. List of Countries with Highest Documents and Citations

Table 2 showcased the list of top 10 countries with highest number of publications along with citations. On the top is Germany with 15 document and 951 citations, the United Sates with 24 documents and 638 citations, United Kingdom with 16 articles and 431 citations. Later, list consists of China, Italy, Australia, Sapin, Canada, Netherlands and Sweden.

Table 2: List of Countries with Highest Documents and Citations

Country	Documents	Citations
Germany	15	951
United States	24	638
United Kingdom	16	431
China	7	265
Italy	12	169
Australia	7	164
Spain	7	140
Canada	3	87
Netherlands	8	48
Sweden	3	29

3.9. Bibliographic Coupling Country Wise

In order to find out the bibliographic coupling, countrywise threshold criteria were taken as follows:

- Minimum number of documents of a country= 12
- Minimum number of citations of a country= 30

The result states that, with the help of bibliographic coupling, United States significant number of 24 documents with a total link strength of 20 in the research area indicated strong research output along with robust collaboration with other countries. This is followed by Germany with 15 documents and a total link strength of 10, which states that researchers actively engage with international literature. Later, United Kingdom with 16 documents holding a link strength of 12.

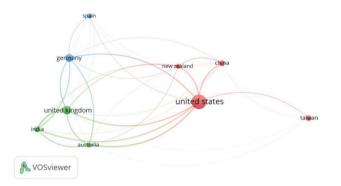


Figure 6: Bibliographic Coupling Countries

3.10. Keyword Co-occurrence, Network Visualization

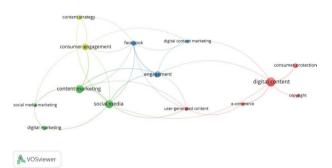
With the help of Author's keywords co-occurrence, certain keywords were analysed for the research study. The threshold criteria for the same was taken as stated below: -

• Minimum number of occurrences= 3

Table 3: Cluster for the Keywords Identified

• Later, 16 keywords were taken for the analysis out of the total 438 keywords.

A network visualization of the author's keywords is shown in Figure 7, where it is evident that "Digital content" has become the most frequently used term, highlighting its crucial importance in current research. Keywords that are closely related to one another, like "engagement," "content marketing," and "social media," emphasize how crucial these concepts are to comprehending customer behavior. Facebook's popularity suggests that it is still relevant as a medium for "consumer engagement," and social media marketing represents the changing methods that companies employ to communicate with their target markets. These observations highlight how the field of digital marketing is constantly changing and how continuous investigation into efficient interaction strategies is necessary.





Cluster I (Red): Digital Rights in E-Commerce

Keyword	Occurrences
Consumer protection	4
Copyright	3
Digital content	18
E-Commerce	3
User-generated content	3

Cluster III (Blue): Engagement through Facebook Digital Content

Cluster II (Green): Engaging Audiences through social media and Digital Marketing

Keyword	Occurrences	
Content Marketing	14	
Digital Marketing	4	
Social media	14	
Social media marketing	3	

Cluster IV (Yellow): Strategic Content for consumer engagement

Keyword	Occurrences
Digital Content Marketing	3
Engagement	8
Facebook	6

4. Conclusion

This study underscores the pivotal role of content strategy in driving consumer engagement on digital platforms. By analysing a dataset of 106 articles through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis, we identify best practises in content marketing that can be significantly enhance audience interaction and foster brand loyalty. Our findings reveal key research cluster themes, including Digital Rights in E-Commerce, Engaging Audiences through social media and Digital Marketing, Engagement through Facebook Digital Content and Strategic Content for Consumer Engagement. This mapping of current literature not only highlights the contributions of influential authors and countries but also offers valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners seeking to navigate and innovate within the dynamic field of digital content marketing.

5. Limitations

Despite the robust analysis conducted, this study has certain limitations. Firstly, the reliance on the Scopus database may exclude relevant articles available in other databases, potentially limiting the breadth of the findings. Additionally, while the PRISMA technique ensures a systematic selection process, the chosen articles may still reflect biases in publication trends, focusing primarily on English-language research. Lastly, as the landscape of digital content marketing continues to change rapidly, the insights derived from the study may require ongoing revaluation to remain relevant and applicable in future research and practise.

Acknowledgement

Authors are highly grateful to the editor in chief, handling editor and anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments to strengthen the quality of the study.

Authorship Contribution

Rupinder Kaur Tiwana conceptualized the study, developed the framework for the literature review, performed the analysis, and wrote the manuscript structure. Amandeep Kaur contributed to the research design, collection of literature and manuscript review and editing.

Keyword	Occurrences	
Consumer engagement	9	
Content strategy	4	

Ethical Approval

This study did not involve human participants or any procedures requiring ethical approval.

Funding

The authors received no funding for this research study.

Declaration

The authors declare that this manuscript is an original work and has not been published elsewhere, nor is it under consideration for publication by any other journal. All authors have contributed significantly to the study and have approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Journal of Technology Management for Growing Economies

Chitkara University, Saraswati Kendra, SCO 160-161, Sector 9-C, Chandigarh, 160009, India

Volume 15, Issue 2	October 2024	ISSN 2456-3226

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