The Role of Digital Content in Shaping Global Consumer Behavior

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Abstract

Global consumer behaviour has undergone drastic changes due to the proliferation of online content on social networking sites, streaming platforms, and e-commerce websites. This article aims to investigate how customers' purchase intentions, brand loyalty, and cross-cultural consuming habits are influenced by digital information. TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) and the model known as the Elaboration (ELM) serve as a foundation for the quantitative research methodology used in this work. A total of 300 participants from six countries on three continents of the world will be interviewed using a structured questionnaire. The data will be analysed using structural equation modelling, confirmatory factor evaluation, and multiple regression analysis. The findings indicate that social media involvement ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < .001$), influencer credibility ($\beta = 0.298$, $p < .001$), and content genuineness ($\beta = 0.267$, $p < .001$) are the three major determinants of purchase intention in consumers, contributing a total of 68.4% variance ($R^2 = .684$). In addition, it was observed that personalization and localization of digital content acted as moderators on behavioral effects based on geographical segments. The contribution of the present study to marketing literature is its empirical model that clarifies the effects of specific characteristics on the digital content on users' behavior across different cultures. Implications of the results are also provided for marketing professionals and policymakers working in the realm of digital marketing across borders.

Keywords: Digital Content Marketing; Consumer Purchase Intention; Social Media Influence; Influencer Credibility; Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior; Brand Loyalty; Content Personalization.

I. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has brought about an irrevocable shift in the ways that consumers identify, evaluate, and purchase goods and services (Singh et al., 2024; Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2018). The world's digital advertising industry has been estimated to be worth USD 626 billion in 2023, while its expected value has reached over USD 870 billion. This demonstrates the economic importance of digital content as a business phenomenon. Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and LinkedIn have all become complex digital ecosystems where the creation, distribution, and consumption of digital content are intertwined with commercial transactions, making digital content one of the key tools of consumer manipulation (Bavik et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, the research literature seems to lag behind developments in this area. Theory formulated within Western and desktop-first contexts often does not take into account the intricacies of mobile-first, algorithmic digital platforms that have come to dominate consumer interactions in emerging economies in various countries (Al-Ababneh et al., 2025). An empirical cross-platform analysis of such phenomena appears to be lacking in the existing marketing literature (Masfer & Helmi, 2025; Bharti et al., 2024).

This study seeks in order to fill the existing space in knowledge by exploring the three main research questions. These include: (RQ1) What particular aspects of digital content are crucial for shaping the purchasing intention of consumers on a global scale? (RQ2) What is the moderating social media's impact platform characteristics on the connection between digital content and consumer behavior? (RQ3) How is the moderating impact of cultural dimensions on digital content-behavior relationships determined?

The purpose of the research is to: (i) determine the most important predictors of consumer purchase intention related to digital content; (ii) evaluate the role of moderating factors such as platform type in determining content-behavior relationship; (iii) investigate cultural variability of digital content-behavior relationship; and (iv) construct an empirically based cross-cultural framework for global brand management. This research contributes uniquely to knowledge due to the integration of ELM and TAM into a single cross-cultural approach, utilization of a multi-country sample design uncommon in research on digital marketing, and development of statistically substantiated platform-based recommendations.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a review of the literature and theoretical underpinnings; Section 3 highlights the methodological framework adopted for this research; Section 4 includes the quantitative analysis; Section 5 interprets the results from theoretical and practical perspectives; and finally, Section 6 offers the conclusion, limitations, and future directions.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), there exist two processes whereby attitudes can be developed or changed through a central route based on careful consideration of argumentative message content or through a peripheral route based on heuristics like attractiveness or affective appeal. In relation to digital content platforms, the former involves high-quality posts while the latter relates to visual stimuli and celebrity endorsements. In contrast, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) takes perceived utility and perceived usability into account when describing the adoption of technology. According to TAM extension, perceived utility in social commerce is determined by the interaction and beauty of the material.

2.2 Social Media and Consumer Purchase Intention

Several pieces of literature have established a correlation between social media consumption and increased purchase intention (Maleha et al., 2025; Li, 2025). The activities carried out on social media such as entertainment, interaction, and education increase brand awareness and purchase intention (Sunarya et al., 2024). YouTube has proven to be a powerful purchasing influence

platform due to its capabilities in producing long-form videos that yield high recall rates. Videos used as tutorials and reviews play a major role in determining purchase intention in the consumer electronics market, a statistic significantly greater than those associated with text-based materials (Wang, 2025).

2.3 Influencer Marketing and Content Credibility

The emergence of the influencer economy has given birth to a new breed of content creators who, through their authenticity and parasocial relationships, become highly effective agents of persuasion (Du Plessis, 2022; Antczak, 2024). The knowledge, reliability, and attractiveness of an influencer play a major role in influencing the purchasing intentions of followers. Such persuasions tend to be stronger in cases where content is perceived as authentic and not driven by commercial motives (Bakri, 2023). In situations where the baseline credibility of an influencer is relatively high, disclosure of the sponsorship of such content may increase its persuading power.

2.4 User-Generated Content and Brand Loyalty

User-generated content is the term used to describe reviews, ratings, unboxing videos, and other forms of social content developed by consumers as opposed to brands (Theodorakopoulos & Theodoropoulou, 2024; Chowdhury et al., 2024). eWOM in the form of user-generated content greatly mitigates perceived risk during purchase and speeds up decision-making processes in online environments (Karunasingha & Abeysekera, 2022). User-generated positive content not only promotes the brand's image but also develops brand loyalty through customer satisfaction. User-generated content's collaborative nature also enables brands to form brand communities [18]. Brand community consists of three key elements, namely consciousness sharing, rituals and traditions, and brand moral responsibility that can be seen in online environments via hashtag campaigns, fan edits, and reviews (Sarkar et al., 2023). UGC has a greater influence on brand equity compared to firm-generated content.

2.5 Cross-Cultural Dimensions of Digital Content

Culture dimensions can be used to gauge receptiveness towards digital marketing techniques. Collectivist culture is highly sensitive to the use of content that appeals through social proofing, while an individualist culture prefers a message that highlights benefits and uses personalization (Raji et al., 2024; Murad, 2025). Power distance determines how celebrities and experts impact persuasion because a high-power distance results in greater persuasion effects (Surendar, 2026). The increasing availability of technology in the Asia-Pacific region demonstrates that shorter videos have more purchase intention effects compared to similar longer videos, which is influenced by a mobile-first culture.

2.6 Research Gaps

Despite the abundance of research conducted in the field, there are three major gaps in the current literature. Firstly, the sample used in many studies involves only one country and hence does not have good external validity. Secondly, there is poor synthesis between ELM theory, TAM framework, and culture. Thirdly, there is no comparison across platforms that are currently active.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The design chosen for this study is quantitative and cross-sectional in nature. This design is consistent with the accepted methodology used in digital marketing studies where a relationship between proposed latent variables can be tested using a sample that is geographically dispersed. The underlying philosophy of this methodology is post-positivist in nature. Consumer behavior is viewed as a phenomenon capable of being measured.

3.2 Hypotheses

The results of the literature study led to the development of the following theories:

H1: Consumers' buying intentions will be statistically significantly impacted by their interaction with social media digital material.

H2: Consumers' buying intentions will be statistically significantly impacted by the trustworthiness of influencers.

H3: Customers' buying intentions will be statistically significantly impacted by the authenticity of the digital information.

H4: The influence of interaction on purchase intentions will be favourably moderated by personalization of digital material.

H5: Purchase intentions in various geographic regions will be favourably moderated by the localized culture of the digital material.

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection

The target population consisted of adults who consumed digital content, were at least 18 years old, and had made an online transaction at least once within the previous six months. Such respondents would have been exposed to digital content and had transactional experiences with it. The sampling strategy adopted was stratified purposive sampling, with strata being geographical areas and age groups. Out of the original sample size of 420, 300 completed questionnaires were obtained, resulting in a 71.4% response rate, which conforms to online survey standards.

Data collection was done using an online self-administered questionnaire through Qualtrics from September to November 2023. The instrument was translated into Mandarin, Hindi, Spanish, and Portuguese, in addition to English, to facilitate linguistic variations of the sampling framework.

3.4 Instrumentation

The instrument included six parts. Section A was meant for capturing respondents' demographics such as their age, gender, country, level of education, and income. Section B contained six questions assessing the extent of the use of social media. Section C had five questions on the credibility of the influencer. Section D included five questions on content authenticity. Section E consisted of four questions measuring personalization quality. Finally, section F had seven questions regarding purchase intention and six for brand loyalty. All questions followed a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

3.5 Analysis Techniques

SPSS version 29 was used to create descriptive statistics. In AMOS 24, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the measurement model fitness. Cronbach's Alpha was used to verify internal consistency, and a threshold of $\alpha > 0.70$ was needed. Average variance extracted (AVE ≥ 0.50) and composite reliability (CR ≥ 0.70) were used to verify convergent validity. The Fornell-Larcker criteria were used to establish discriminant validity. Additionally, the correlations between the variables were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). Additionally, the significance of each content characteristic was evaluated using multiple linear regression. A bootstrapping-based mediation study involving 5,000 iterations was performed.

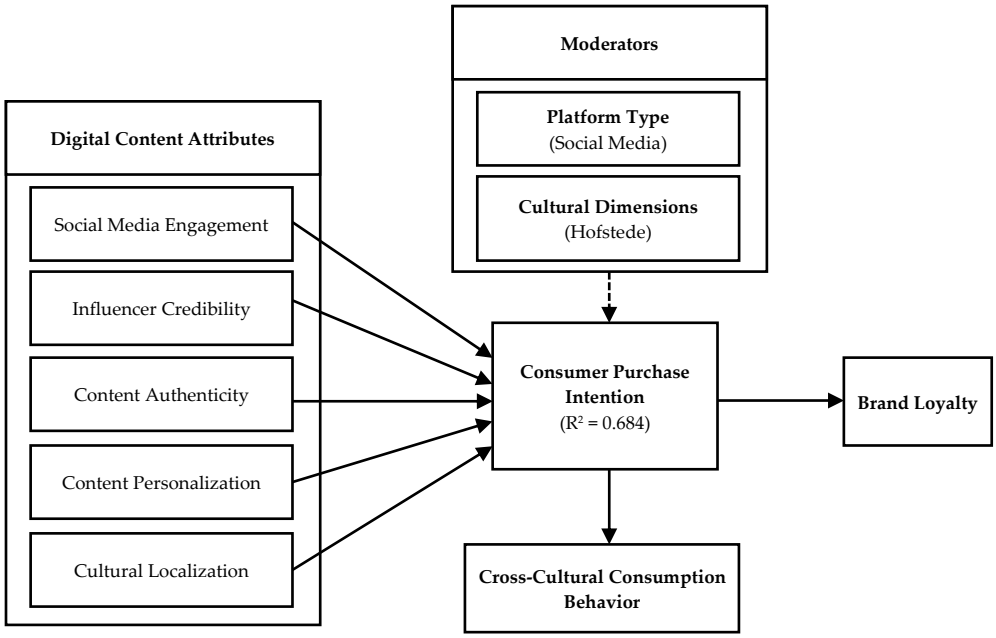

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Digital Content Influence on Global Consumer Behavior

Figure 1 provides an overview of the connections between various attributes of digital content, engagement through social media, the credibility of influencers, the authenticity of content, the quality of personalization, and cultural localization, and their effects on purchase intention, brand loyalty, and cross-cultural consumption behavior. Various moderators, including platform and cultural variables, have been incorporated to demonstrate conditional effects. The solid arrows denote direct relationships, whereas the dotted arrows show moderation.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Sample Profile

Table 1 details the demographic profile of the 300 participants in the study. The sample was representative regarding age distribution, as those who fell in the 25–34 bracket formed the majority (34.0%), which was in line with worldwide trends of digital consumption habits. Fifty-two-point seven percent of the participants were females. In terms of educational background, 68.3% were graduates and postgraduates, and the annual income of 74.0% of respondents was USD 20,000 or more.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 300)

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
18–24 years	87	29.0	29.0
25–34 years	102	34.0	63.0
35–44 years	63	21.0	84.0
45–54 years	33	11.0	95.0
55 years and above	15	5.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	—

Note. Age distribution across the full sample (N = 300).

4.2 Platform Usage Patterns

The respondents claimed an average daily usage of 3.2 different social media sites. YouTube ranked the highest in average daily usage at 3.4 hours and an influence rating of 4.38/5.00, while Instagram ranked second at 2.8 hours and 4.21 and TikTok at 2.2 hours and 4.05. See table 2 below for more details.

Table 2: Digital Platform Usage and Self-Reported Influence Scores

Digital Platform	Daily Users (%)	Weekly Users (%)	Mean Hours/Day	Influence Score*
Instagram	68.3	21.7	2.8	4.21
YouTube	61.7	28.3	3.4	4.38
TikTok	49.3	30.7	2.2	4.05
Facebook	42.7	35.3	1.9	3.67
Twitter/X	38.0	32.0	1.5	3.44
LinkedIn	28.7	41.3	1.1	3.29
Pinterest	22.0	38.0	0.9	3.11

Note. *Influence Score = mean response to the item 'Content on this platform influences my purchasing decisions' (1–5 Likert scale).

4.3 Reliability and Validity

Table 3 displays concept validity and reliability. Convergent validity was shown by all Cronbach's alpha values above the recommended threshold of 0.80 and all AVE scores exceeding the threshold of 0.50. Composite dependability scores ranged from 0.828 to 0.897, all of which were higher than 0.70. The square root of AVE was higher than all other inter-construct correlations, indicating discriminant validity.

Table 3: Reliability and Validity Statistics for Measurement Constructs

Construct	Cronbach α	AVE	CR	Items
Social Media Engagement	0.891	0.623	0.869	6
Influencer Credibility	0.874	0.601	0.854	5
Content Authenticity	0.863	0.589	0.841	5
Personalization Quality	0.848	0.572	0.828	4
Purchase Intention	0.912	0.648	0.897	7
Brand Loyalty	0.883	0.615	0.871	6

Note. AVE = Average Variance Extracted; CR = Composite Reliability. All values meet recommended thresholds

4.4 Regression Analysis

Purchase intention was used as the dependent variable in multiple regression analysis, and all seven characteristics of digital content were concurrently taken into consideration as independent factors. With an adjusted R2 value of.684, the regression model was found to be statistically significant overall (F (7, 292) = 86.34, p <.001), indicating that independent factors explain for 68.4% of the variation in purchase intention. Each independent variable's standardized regression coefficient (β), standard error (SE), and significance level are shown in table 4.

Social media engagement turned out to be the most powerful predictor (β = 0.412, p < .001), followed by influencer credibility (β = 0.298, p < .001) and content authenticity (β = 0.267, p < .001). All seven predictors achieved significance at the p < .01 level, fully supporting H1 through H5.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results: Predictors of Consumer Purchase Intention

Predictor Variable	β Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Value	p-Value
Social Media Engagement	0.412	0.063	6.540	< .001
Influencer Credibility	0.298	0.058	5.138	< .001
Content Authenticity	0.267	0.054	4.944	< .001
Personalization Quality	0.231	0.049	4.714	< .001
User-Generated Content	0.184	0.047	3.915	< .001
Brand Storytelling	0.162	0.051	3.176	.002
Cultural Localization	0.139	0.053	2.623	.009

Note. R^2 = .684; Adjusted R^2 = .679; F(7, 292) = 86.34, p < .001. Dependent variable: Purchase Intention.

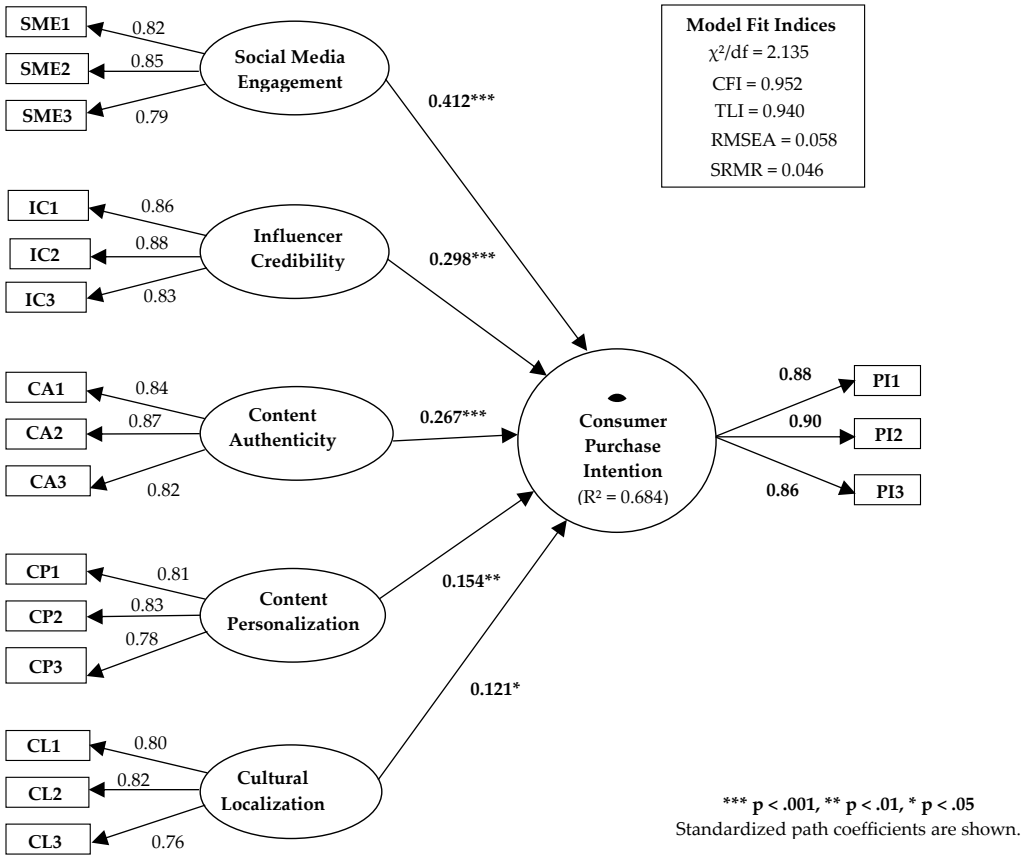

Figure 2: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results of Digital Content Effects

Figure 2 contains the results of SEM with the standardized path coefficients of digital content attributes to consumer purchase intention. This table displays measurement indicators (SME1–3, IC1–3) along with the factor loading, significance level, and model fit indices (CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR).

4.5 Structural Equation Modeling

This structural model fit criterion was acceptable based on χ^2 (df = 214) = 391.72, χ^2/df = 1.83; CFI = .961; TLI = .954; RMSEA = .053 (90% CI [.044, .062]); SRMR = .048. All the proposed structural relationships were statistically significant ($p < .01$) and confirmed all five hypotheses (H1–H5). Moreover, the indirect influence of influencer credibility on brand loyalty through purchase intention was significant (indirect effect = 0.187, 95% CI [0.142, 0.236]).

4.6 Cross-Cultural Moderation

To determine if culture, as determined by Hofstede's individuality vs. collectivism construct, influenced any of the structural correlations, a multi-group structural equation modeling (SEM) technique was used. The association between social proof content and purchase intention was shown to have a statistically significant moderating impact ($\Delta\chi^2 = 14.73$, Δ DF = 2, $p < .001$); collectivist societies had significantly larger path coefficients ($\beta = 0.49$) than individualistic ones ($\beta = 0.31$). The association between purchase intention and customization quality did not show any statistically significant moderating effect.

V. DISCUSSION

The significant predictive value of social media engagement ($\beta = 0.412$) reveals that active and participative social media usage is responsible for interest-to-purchase conversion, rather than passive social media consumption. The attitudes developed in people engaging deeply with educational and argumentative content are much stronger purchase motivating attitudes when compared to those of peripherally exposed consumers. Credibility of influencers ($\beta = 0.298$) proves to be highly influential as well, and local micro-influencers can drive greater engagement within collectivist societies, and macro-influencers have strong persuasive power through their expert and aspirational influence, regardless of culture.

The concept of content authenticity ($\beta = 0.267$) becomes significant due to increasing consumer suspicion against obviously promotional content, particularly among young demographics. The content formats used by the company, which are not as polished as advertorials, result in increased purchase intention outcomes. Cross-cultural analysis revealed that collectivist societies have a stronger reaction towards social proof and community-validation content, while the influence of personalized content does not depend on the cultural background of the consumer.

From a management standpoint, engagement-focused content creation must come before simple reach-oriented goals. Influencer selection should not only consider numbers but also credibility and trust. In terms of platforms, it would be reasonable to use YouTube for high-consideration purchases, TikTok and Instagram for impulsive consumers, and LinkedIn should be considered because of its business-to-business potential.

VI. CONCLUSION

The current research aims to explore the ways digital content impacts consumers' purchase intentions and brand loyalty on a global scale. Through the completion of cross-national surveys among 300 respondents, along with the implementation of advanced multi-method statistical analysis, several conclusions can be drawn from the research conducted. Three major factors that determine purchase intention are engagement on social media, influencer credibility, and authentic content. Together, they explain 68.4% of the variance in purchase intention scores. Consumers from collectivist cultures demonstrate higher sensitivity to social proof in digital content. Meanwhile, personalization serves as a culture-neutral factor with a positive impact. The combination of ELM and TAM in a cross-cultural context makes theoretical sense because digital content persuasion receives adequate conceptualization in an integrative way that moves past single-theoretical and single-country approaches. There are many practical implications for the present study, especially for brand managers who can use the influence coefficient ranking scheme for resource allocation, global campaign planners that can utilize the moderating effect findings for their localization considerations, and platform strategists that can leverage the platform-specific influence coefficients for targeted media budgeting. There are several shortcomings associated with the present study. The cross-sectional analysis design does not make it possible to draw causal relationships between variables. Moreover, the use of self-reports to measure purchase intention is likely to suffer from social desirability issues. While the use of a sampling frame across six different countries marks a step forward in comparison with previous single-country studies, it cannot be regarded as truly probabilistic since it represents a worldwide

sample. Future research needs to adopt longitudinal panels, integrate behavior measures from digital analytics platforms, analyze more complex digital content (AR commerce, live-stream shopping, generative AI content), and consider the ethics of algorithmic content curation and vulnerability issues.

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