Research Paper

The impact of content marketing as a sponsorship activation strategy on online customer engagement

Imad Tribak iD

Budapest University of Economics and Business, Doctoral School of Business and
　　Entrepreneurship, Budapest, Hungary

Correspondence: Tribak.imad.37@unibge.hu

Abstract: Content marketing on social media plays an undeniable role in business communication strategies. In fact, it appears as an emerging trend in many sectors, including event sponsorship. This scoping review explores how content marketing influences online customer engagement when used as a sponsorship activation tool. Utilizing a systematic approach aligned with the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Methodological Guidelines and PRISMA-ScR framework, this study synthesizes findings from 66 peer-reviewed studies spanning multiple industries and geographic regions. This scoping review identifies key mechanisms through which content marketing enhances online customer engagement, including personalized and interactive content, real-time marketing, emotional storytelling, and social media integration. Findings suggest that content marketing fosters higher levels of customer interaction, including likes, comments, shares, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), and increased brand recall. Furthermore, sponsorship activations that leverage content marketing strategies contribute to deeper brand-customer relationships, strengthen brand equity, and enhance customer trust and loyalty. A critical insight of this review presents the growing role of digital platforms and influencer collaborations in amplifying sponsorship effectiveness. Brands that incorporate user-generated content (UGC), gamification, and immersive digital experiences tend to drive greater engagement. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of culturally relevant and ethically transparent content in fostering audience connections across diverse markets.

Keywords: content marketing, social media, event sponsorship, online customer engagement, sponsorship activation

1. Introduction

　　The rise of digital marketing, which necessitated a reassessment of the marketing strategies of businesses that intended to remain competitive in the new digital era, was one of the key transformations that traditional marketing underwent. As a result, content marketing has emerged as the most crucial element of an effective internet marketing strategy (Kumar et al., 2016; Sárközi & Szabó, 2024). Content marketing is defined as "a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience, and ultimately, to drive profitable customer action" (Content Marketing Institute, n.d.).

　　Sharing online content is a vital aspect of today's customer culture. People share YouTube videos, read and forward hotel or restaurant reviews, and send news and intriguing items to relatives and friends all over the world. Customers and brands are impacted by this social transmission of content and information. Customer-to-customer interactions in both online and offline settings have an impact on people's views and preferences, and ultimately on their purchasing behaviour (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Zhang & Mao, 2021; Trangle, 2025). As technology has advanced, content marketing is taking use of the interactivity it offers to establish two-way channels of communication with both current and potential customers. Through the use of internet-based technologies, content marketing fosters customer engagement.

　　The proliferation of content marketing has emerged in many sectors including event sponsorship, which is regarded as one of the most powerful media (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020;

Didner, 2024; Pfeiffer & Sulikowski, 2018). Event sponsorship is the most widely utilized kind of marketing communication, increasingly used by businesses (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019; Maral & Ölçen, 2023). Due to a decline in audiences for traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, event sponsorship has emerged as a marketing communication strategy (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020; Marketing Charts, 2024; Szabó et al., 2014). Just over 18 million people watched the 2025 Oscars ceremony on ABC and Hulu, which signals a 7% decrease from 2024. This presents a continuing long-term declining trend in television viewership driven by the growth of online alternatives (Shoard, 2025). The number of American newspapers shrank from 1,749 in 1945 to 1,331 by the end of 2014 (Kamarck & Gabriele, 2015), and the estimated total daily newspaper circulation was 20.9 million for both weekdays and Sundays in 2022, reflecting decreases of 8% and 10%, respectively, from the previous year (Pew Research Center, 2023). On the other hand, the market for sports sponsorship, for example, increased at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 8.73% from $105.47 billion in 2023 to $114.41 billion in 2024, and is expected to reach $189.54 billion by 2030 (Research and Markets, 2024). By 2030, global brands are expected to invest $189.5 billion in corporate sponsorships, up from $97.4 billion in 2022 (Weinger, 2025).

Content marketing in the context of event sponsorship is used as an activation strategy: this is the deliberate and strategic implementation of marketing campaigns that use a sponsorship investment to directly engage target audiences and to produce memorable, interactive experiences that not only link such audiences to the objectives of the sponsoring brand but also build brand equity (Marceau & Pons, 2023). This implies that the target audiences are no longer passive recipients of the advertising content, but they want to engage, in an active manner, with the sponsoring brands.

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) (Katz et al., 1973) explains why customers interact with branded content as they actively seek media that satisfies their informational, entertainment, or social needs. Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958), on the other hand, suggests that individuals engage with content when the perceived benefits outweigh the costs, thereby making valuable, entertaining, and incentive-driven content particularly effective in digital marketing. Furthermore, Relationship Marketing Theory (RMT) (Berry, 1983; Grönroos, 1994) highlights the importance of long-term engagement and customer loyalty, which aligns with content marketing's goal of fostering trust and commitment in highly competitive digital spaces.

As content marketing continues to expand, particularly through social media, understanding how customers process messages is crucial. Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) explains that customers engage with marketing messages through either deep cognitive processing (central route) or more superficial cues like visuals and entertainment (peripheral route). This is particularly relevant in sponsorship activations, where interactive and engaging content enhances brand recall and strengthens customer relationships. Additionally, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) suggests that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence customers' willingness to interact with branded content, thus making social endorsement a key factor in amplifying sponsorship effectiveness.

With the dominance of digital platforms, motivation-driven engagement plays a significant role in content marketing success. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2000) suggests that customers seek autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their interactions with brands. Content marketing that fosters these psychological needs, through interactive campaigns, personalized experiences, and community-driven engagement, strengthens customer relationships and promotes long-term loyalty. As businesses increasingly integrate content marketing into sponsorship activation strategies, leveraging these theoretical frameworks provides valuable insights into customer behaviour and helps create effective, engaging, and lasting marketing campaigns.

A whopping 94% of internet users on the planet utilize social media (Chaffey, 2025). Also, users spend on average two hours and 31 minutes every day on platforms according to data provided by Chaffey (2025). Additionally, social media is listed first among sponsorship activation tools, and 98% of sponsors use it (KORE Software, 2024), which figure shows tremendous growth (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020; Didner, 2024). Moreover, 95% of B2B organizations cite social media as their first technique of employing content marketing according to User Guiding (2024). Therefore, it is impossible to approach content marketing as a sponsorship activation strategy without incorporating social networks.

Advertising has occupied an increasingly larger space on social networks in recent years. The market value of social media advertising as a whole was worth 181.2 billion dollars in 2021 and is anticipated to reach 358 billion dollars by 2026 (Statista, 2023). To build relationships with customers, many businesses view social networks as an unprecedented potential (Angeles Oviedo-Garcia et al., 2014; Batra & Keller, 2020; Tsiotsou, 2017; Zhang & Szabó, 2024). Several studies have also shown that social networks have a favorable impact on how customers engage with brands (Chen & Xie, 2021; Gu & Duan, 2024; Yang et al., 2016).

Despite the growing importance of content marketing in sponsorship activation strategies, there is still a lack of research on how brands can effectively leverage social media content to maximize customer engagement (Hanna et al., 2011; Shang & Chen, 2020). Additionally, studies have highlighted the increasing use of social networks in sponsorship activations. However, little is known about the specific content marketing strategies that drive audience interaction and brand connection. Moreover, the challenges businesses face in implementing effective content marketing on social media, such as the lack of strategic guidance, suggest a need for further exploration into best practices for optimizing sponsorship-related content. This gap is particularly relevant given the rapid evolution of digital platforms and shifting customer behaviours, which necessitate deeper understanding of how to create impactful, engagement-driven sponsorship activations.

With the distribution and accessibility of digital branded content on different platforms, numerous studies acknowledge the crucial role that content marketing plays in altering online customer engagement. However, the literature is fragmented and diverse, making it difficult to fully comprehend the conclusive evidence of content marketing's impact on online customer engagement. Furthermore, it is challenging to comprehend all evidence from various academic perspectives due to the nature of the content marketing industry. Scholars' interchangeable use of terminology further impedes the interpretation of the impact of content marketing on online customer engagement. For instance, a number of studies refer to content marketing and social media marketing in the same manner. There are various distinctions even if social media is also used extensively in content marketing. Content Marketing Institute (n.d.), for example, suggests that the main purpose of content marketing is to attract and retain a clearly defined audience and ultimately drive profitable customer action, whereas social media marketing aims to foster interaction, engagement, and community building (Felix et al., 2017; Lian et al., 2023). Moreover, content marketing is not limited to social media and can include blogs, whitepapers, videos, podcasts, and other forms of content (Pulizzi, 2014; Ellering, 2023). On the other hand, social media marketing relies on third-party platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok to distribute content and to engage with audiences (Wong, 2025). The two concepts also differ in the strategy approach, as content marketing is broader, and provides value beyond merely promotions. Content marketing supports inbound marketing efforts by drawing customers through informative and educational content (Content Marketing Institute, 2021), whereas social media marketing often focuses on short-term campaigns, viral content, and direct audience interaction (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Kiely, 2024).

Given the fragmentary and diverse findings in the literature, there is an evident need for further research to synthesize existing findings. The research question of this study is: How does content marketing as a sponsorship activation strategy impact online customer engagement? This paper aims to investigate the existing literature on the impact of content marketing as a sponsorship activation strategy on online customer engagement and to provide future research avenues on the topic.

The paper begins with a brief chapter highlighting the importance of content marketing on social media in sponsorship activation strategies. Secondly, the method used to examine the correlation between content marketing as a sponsorship activation strategy and online customer engagement is presented in detail. Thirdly, the findings from data collection are analysed, compiled, summarized, and reported in three tables. Finally, the results are discussed, and the research and practical implications, along with the limitations and potential research avenues, are addressed in the final section.

2. Importance of content marketing on social media in the field of sponsorship activation strategies

O'Reilly and Homing (2013) define sponsorship activation as "the marketing activities that a company conducts to promote its sponsorship, and the money spent on activation is over and above the rights fee paid to the sponsored property" (p.426). Sponsors are increasingly combining digital and online marketing into their sponsorship activations, and a growing portion of many firms' sponsorship activation strategy now includes content marketing on social media (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020; Shuqair et al., 2024).

Brands can get a variety of benefits from using social media in their content marketing strategy, including interest generation, building brand likeability and credibility, and bolstering brand-customer links (Labudová, 2024; Morrison & Salazar, 2020). Moreover, brands can reach a large and highly engaged audience using social media platforms, which is crucial in sponsorship activation (Barbu et al., 2018; Bredikhina & Kunkel, 2022; Müller & Hennig-Thurau, 2021).

Brands can create content that resonates with their target audiences, thus increasing the impact of sponsorship agreements (Barbu & Constantin, 2021; Keller, 2016; Smith & Zook, 2021). Sharing content with users, such as influencer collaborations, behind-the-scenes footage, or engaging campaigns, makes brands' sponsorship more visible and fosters stronger engagement with fans (De Veirman et al., 2020; Xu, 2023).

Today's customers are looking for authentic brand interactions more and more extensively. Brands may portray themselves in a more relatable and personal manner using social media content (Cowan & Kostyk, 2023). Content marketing allows brands to engage in conversations that feel genuine and emotionally connected to the audience through sponsorship activation (Bredikhina & Kunkel, 2024; Cornwell & Kwon, 2020; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). This type of connection can lead to long-term customer relationships and brand loyalty, especially when sponsorship activations touch on relevant causes or events that are meaningful to the target audience (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023).

Social media also provides an ideal platform for sharing compelling stories about sponsorships (Cunningham & Kwon, 2021; Filo et al., 2015; Jhawar et al., 2024). Brands can engage their audience through narratives that convey the values and benefits of the sponsorship by creating rich and multimedia content, as storytelling is one of the most effective marketing tools (Schultz & Peltier, 2020; Sweeney et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2024). Content marketing on social media helps sponsor-driven narratives in being popular and going viral, which enables the sponsoring brand to become more widely known and recalled (Harris & Rae, 2017; Lee & Ko, 2021).

The ability to communicate with customers in real time is also one of the main advantages of using social media for sponsorship activation (Chadwick et al., 2017; Marthinus et al., 2024). Brands can engage with their audience instantly through features like comments, direct messages, and live streaming. This feedback loop allows brands to assess the effectiveness of their sponsorship activation and to make real-time adjustments to their content strategy. In addition, the content may be enhanced to make it more relevant and to resonate with the target audiences by using this immediate feedback (Morrison & Salazar, 2020; Trunfio & Rossi, 2021).

Brands can also optimize their sponsorship activations by utilizing the comprehensive data analytics provided by social media platforms (Gonçalves et al., 2020). Marketers can improve their content strategy to better meet the preferences of their target audiences by using metrics, such as engagement rates, sentiment analysis, and audience demographics (Bansal et al., 2025; Kohli & Suri, 2016). Brands may more effectively assess the return on investment (ROI) of their sponsorship activations by tracking sponsored content performance (Fleming & Barr, 2021; Fletcher et al., 2016).

Influencer marketing on social media is also another common tactic used by brands in their sponsorship activation strategy. Influencers have the ability to create social media content that resonates profoundly with their followers (Baker et al., 2019; Saternus et al., 2024). This type of content is frequently regarded as more authentic and engaging than conventional advertising (Audrezet et al., 2020; Liao & Chen, 2024). The brand's message will reach a wider and more relevant audience when influencer collaborations are used in social media sponsorship activation, thereby increasing the sponsorship's overall impact.

3. Methodology

A scoping review was used as a method, in this research, to comprehensively map the existing literature on content marketing and its impact on online customer engagement. Researchers often use a scoping review to identify a gap in knowledge, clarify concepts, review a body of literature, or review complex or heterogeneous literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Munn et al., 2018). Also, for the purpose of the review, it was crucial to explore the range of evidence available on the correlation between content marketing and online customer engagement, which is often challenging to find in large and unclear subject areas (Peters et al., 2021). The scoping review was guided by the principles of Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Methodological Guidelines (Aromataris & Riitano, 2014; Peters et al., 2021), which also aligns with the PRISMA-ScR framework (Tricco et al., 2018). The review is presented in accordance with the five-phase framework proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005).

3.1 Phase 1: Formulating the research question

This scoping review attempts to answer the following main research question: How does content marketing as a sponsorship activation strategy impact online customer engagement? This question led to three sub-questions:
Sub-question 1: How can we characterize the studies available on this topic?
Sub-question 2: What is the evidence of the correlation between content marketing and online customer engagement?
Sub-question 3: Which range of methodologies was used in these studies?

3.2 Phase 2: Identifying the relevant studies

The studies in this review were searched based on the key concepts related to content marketing and online customer engagement. The following reputable databases were used to find the relevant studies: Scopus, Science Direct, Web of Science, EBSCO/Business Source Ultimate, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. The rationale behind choosing these databases lies in the fact that they cover business and management studies, including marketing and scholarly journals that publish studies on content marketing. Several databases were also searched to cover most articles, as suggested by MacFarlane et al. (2022). The following Boolean search commands were used to query these databases:

- ("Content marketing" OR "branded content" OR "digital marketing") AND ("online consumer" OR "online customer engagement")
- ("Content marketing" OR "branded content" OR "digital marketing") AND ("attracting online consumers" OR customers)
- ("Content marketing" OR "branded content" OR "digital marketing") AND ("engaging online consumers" OR customers)
- ("Content marketing" OR "branded content" OR "digital marketing") AND ("affects online consumer" or "online customer")
- ("Content marketing" OR "branded content" OR "digital marketing") AND ("influences online consumer" OR "online customer")
- ("Content marketing" OR "branded content" OR "digital marketing") AND ("sponsorship activation" AND "online customer engagement")
- (Impact OR effect) AND ("content marketing" OR "branded content" OR "digital marketing") AND ("online consumer" OR "online customer engagement")
- ("Content marketing" OR "branded content" OR "digital marketing") AND ("sponsorship activation" OR "sponsorship strategy" OR "sponsor engagement" OR "sponsored events") AND ("online customer engagement" OR "digital audience interaction" OR "consumer engagement")
- ("Content marketing" AND "sponsorship activation") AND ("customer engagement" OR "brand loyalty" OR "brand advocates" OR "brand trust" OR "social media interaction")
- ("Content marketing" AND "sponsorship activation") AND ("customer engagement" OR "brand attachment" OR "brand perception")

- ("Content marketing" AND "sponsorship activation") AND ("customer engagement" OR "customer relationships")
- ("Content marketing" AND "sponsorship activation") AND ("customer engagement" OR participation OR involvement OR "word of mouth" OR "purchase intention")
- ("Content marketing" AND "sponsorship activation") AND ("social media" OR "online platforms" OR "digital engagement") AND ("customer behavior" OR "consumer interaction")
- ("Content marketing" AND "sponsorship activation") AND ("customer engagement" OR "brand interaction") AND ("case study" OR "empirical research" OR "systematic review")
- ("Content marketing" AND "sponsorship activation") AND ("return on investment" OR KPI's OR "conversion rates") AND ("customer engagement" OR "brand awareness")

To simplify and enhance the search for unique documents in our dataset, we used Boolean operators. Specifically, the "AND" operator was applied to ensure that all terms appeared in the search results, thereby narrowing the search and reducing irrelevant results. In contrast, the "OR" operator retrieved results that contained at least one of the specified terms, thus expanding the search by including synonyms or related terms. Furthermore, parentheses were employed to group search terms and maintain the correct order of operations, thereby preventing the search engine from misinterpreting the logic. Additionally, quotation marks were used to force the search engine to look for an exact phrase or a concept consisting of two or three words rather than separate words, ensuring more precise results.

In addition to the comprehensive Boolean search strategy outlined above, further measures were taken to reduce the potential exclusion of relevant studies.

Despite efforts to expand and diversify the search strategy, we acknowledge the inherent risk of missing relevant studies due to variations in terminology and indexing across different databases. To mitigate this risk, we adopted a multi-pronged approach. First, we deliberately selected a broad set of databases that span marketing management and business research. Second, we formulated an inclusive set of Boolean search queries incorporating synonyms and related constructs, including "branded content", "digital marketing", and various forms of "customer engagement". Third, we complemented this systematic approach with manual techniques, including backward citation tracking (examining references from selected papers) and forward citation analysis using tools like Google Scholar to identify newer studies that cited key articles. These steps were particularly helpful in identifying studies that may not have used standard terminology in titles or abstracts. Lastly, we reviewed the reference lists in existing systematic reviews and conceptual papers on content marketing to ensure that no significant study was unintentionally excluded. While it is impossible to guarantee full coverage in any review, these steps were designed to maximize the inclusiveness and comprehensiveness of our literature base.

3.3 Phase 3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study were determined using a methodological protocol. To be selected, the publications had to meet the following inclusion criteria: a research or conceptual study; peer-reviewed journal articles; conference proceedings; scientific research with any research design; published in English; published from 2012 to 2024; addressed the impact on online customer engagement; and referred to content marketing in the title and/or abstract and/or body of the paper.

The search process varied slightly across the aforementioned databases, depending on the available features and filters. Firstly, in Scopus, advanced search options were employed to ensure precise search. The terms were entered in the title, abstract, and keyword fields to capture the most relevant studies. Boolean operators such as "AND" and "OR" were used to combine terms like "content marketing", "sponsorship activation", "customer engagement", and "brand loyalty". Additionally, filters were applied to limit the search to articles published between 2012 and 2024 and within peer-reviewed journals. Moreover, document types were filtered to include only articles, reviews, and conference papers. Similar advanced search functions were employed in Science Direct and Web of Science, focusing on business and marketing journals, with date and document type filters applied. Likewise, in EBSCO/Business Source Ultimate, searches were conducted using both basic and advanced

search functions, applying filters for full-text, peer-reviewed articles in business and marketing. On the other hand, the search in JSTOR was performed using its advanced search capabilities, where Boolean operators were applied to combine key terms, filtering for academic journals in business and social sciences from 2012 to 2024. Lastly, for Google Scholar, the search was broader, as the platform does not allow for as many specific filtering options. Search terms were entered with quotations marks to capture exact phrases (e.g., "content marketing strategy"), and the data range was customized (from 2012 to 2024). Boolean operators were used to combine terms and related synonyms. Although Google Scholar does not offer extensive filtering, results were manually refined by relevance and citation count, and only articles published within the last decade were considered. Finally, the results were manually screened to ensure relevance, focusing on peer-reviewed articles and academic publications.

The past 12 years have seen a considerable evolution in content marketing and sponsorship activation, especially with the emergence of social media platforms, influencer marketing, and data-driven customer engagement strategies. Choosing 2012 as a starting point ensures coverage of modern sponsorship strategies shaped by digital transformation. In order to measure sponsorship effectiveness, businesses began using engagement metrics such as likes, shares, comments and brand interactions more strategically after 2012. A comprehensive analysis of how engagement has been evaluated and impacted by content marketing in sponsorship contexts is made possible by the inclusion of studies from this timeframe. The emergence of several digital tools over the last 12 years, such as programmatic advertising, AI-driven marketing, and interactive content, has changed the way sponsorship activations are executed. Examining studies from this period sheds light on how content marketing's role in sponsorship has changed as a result of technology developments. In addition, the selected timeframe aligns with an increase of scholarly interest in customer engagement and digital marketing, ensuring the review includes current and pertinent research. Prior to 2012, many studies concentrated on conventional sponsorship methods; however, the post-2012 period reflects a shift toward digital-first strategies. Furthermore, the review's extension until 2024 ensures that it will capture the latest trends, tools, and the best practices in content marketing for sponsorship activation. This helps identify research gaps and emerging themes that can guide future studies. As illustrated in Figure 1, the article selection process followed a structured, systematic, and transparent approach.
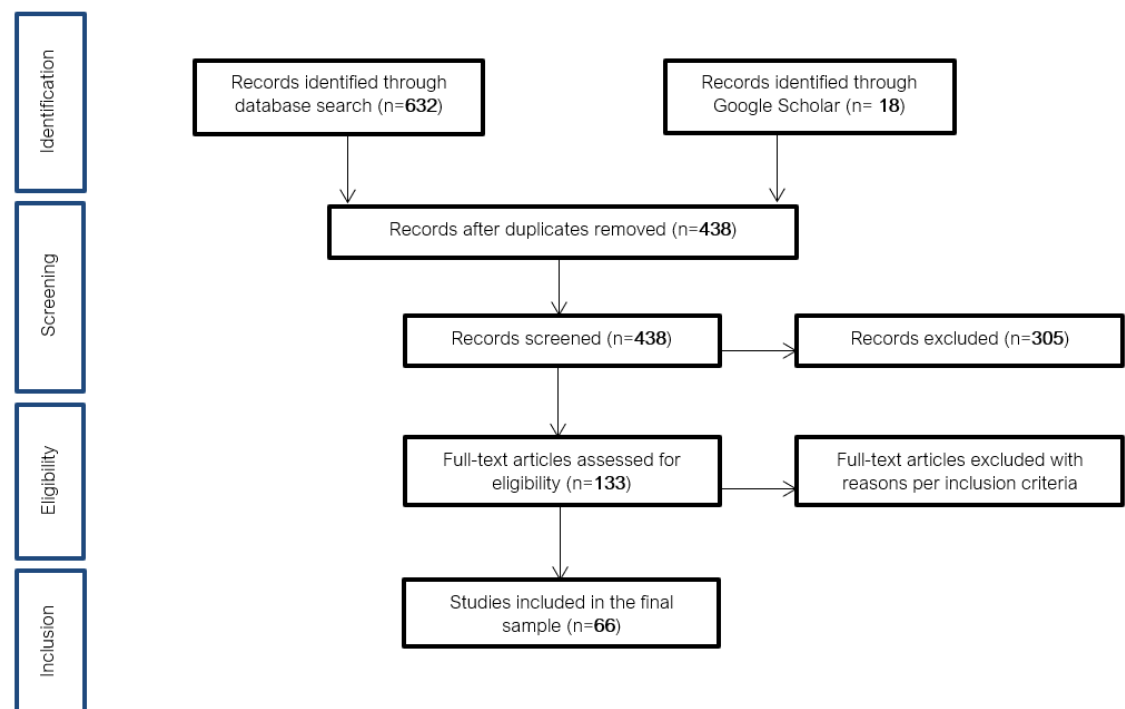

Figure 1: Article selection process. Source: Authors' own

Initially, 632 records were retrieved from academic databases, with an additional 18 records identified through Google Scholar. All references were imported into Mendeley reference management software (version 2.108.0), where duplicates were automatically and manually removed, resulting in 438 unique records. These records were screened at the title and abstract levels based on broad inclusion criteria focused on content marketing and online customer engagement. At this stage, 305 records were excluded for not meeting topical relevance or publication-type standards.

The remaining 133 full-text articles were imported into ATLAS.ti software (version 24) for structured coding and evaluation. A deductive coding framework was applied to assess alignment with the inclusion criteria, including clarity of research objectives, relevance to digital content strategies, the presence of empirical or conceptual analysis, and the extent to which online customer engagement was examined. Each article was coded across several dimensions, such as research methodology (quantitative, qualitative and conceptual), industry context, geographic focus, and engagement outcomes. A codebook was developed and refined during a pilot coding phase to ensure consistent application across studies.

To enhance methodological rigor, an audit trail was maintained throughout the coding process, including memos for borderline cases, detailed justifications for inclusion or exclusion, and logs of decision-making. When ambiguity arose, a secondary reviewer was consulted to reach consensus. Based on this process, 67 articles were excluded, most commonly due to insufficient methodological quality or weak alignment with the review's focus. The final sample comprised 66 studies, including journal articles and conference proceedings.

3.4 Phase 4: Extracting and analyzing relevant data

Two summary tables (See Appendices A and B), covering the authors, year of publication, journal, objectives, research methodology and approach, context and industry, study's location, impact of content marketing on online customer engagement, and the reason of impact, were used to systematically extract the content of the articles in the final sample. Subsequently, the data was categorized based on the research's three sub-questions.

3.5 Phase 5: Compiling, summarizing and reporting

During this stage, a quantitative process was used to first quantify and classify the raw data. The data was then qualitatively interpreted using a deductive approach to provide meaning that aligns with the sub-questions of the study. Therefore, mapping our current knowledge of the relationship between content marketing and online customer engagement was essential, as was summarizing the results for future research.

4. Results

In this scoping review, 66 primary studies examined content marketing and online customer engagement from a variety of epistemological research dispositions and lenses. Scholarly attention has recently shifted from an initial focus on the definition and components of content marketing to studies that also investigate the results of content marketing in the context of online customer engagement in order to provide more conclusive evidence of their correlation.

The results section is structured to provide a clear response to the study's primary research question by systematically addressing its sub-questions. The first segment – characteristics of the included studies – offers a comprehensive overview of the selected research, highlighting key attributes such as objectives, methodologies, and industry contexts. This foundational understanding then leads into the evidence of the correlation, where the relationship between content marketing and online customer engagement is examined, and also empirical findings that support or challenge this connection are presented. Finally, the research methodologies used details the analytical approaches employed across studies, thereby providing insight into the reliability and validity of the results, which can be interpreted as follows.

In Appendix A, the table demonstrates a general description of the key characteristics and findings of the 66 studies included in this scoping review. The data was collected from 29 countries and geographic regions, namely the United States (n=8), Singapore (n=3), Turkey (n=3), Australia (n=3), South Korea (n=3), Finland (n=2), Spain (n=2), Germany (n=2), United Kingdom (n=2) and one study per country for Jordan, China, South Africa, Thailand, Indonesia, Czech Republic, New Zealand, Ireland, Norway, Canada, India, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Lithuania, Switzerland, and one study was conducted in Asia and Europe as one study location. On the other hand, 10 studies did not specify the study's location: they focused on a global context. Moreover, the studies were published in 46 academic journals and 2 conference proceedings (Table 1).

Table 1: Journals and conference proceedings included in the review. Source: Author's own

Study No.	Journal	Number of studies
11, 20, 39, 56, 66	Journal of Business Research	5
6, 27, 51, 57	Journal of Interactive Marketing	4
3, 26, 28	International Journal of Advertising	3
9, 43, 53,	Industrial Marketing Management	3
34, 41, 65	Journal of Marketing	3
2, 35	Journal of Advertising	2
42, 55	International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship	2
1, 44	Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	2
25, 40	Australian Marketing Journal	2
5, 33	Journal of Interactive Advertising	2
15, 31	European Journal of Marketing	2
32, 36	Journal of International Marketing	2
4	Management Science Letters	1
7	Journal of Consumer Marketing	1
8	International Journal of Emerging markets	1
10	Academic Research International	1
12	International SME Conference (ISMEC)	1
13	Sport Management Review	1
14	Journal Komunikasi Profesional	1
16	Journal of Digital Economy	1
17	SHS Web of Conferences Globalization and its Socio-economic Consequences	1
18	Colombo Business Journal	1
19	Sport Marketing Quarterly	1
21	African Diaspora Journal of Mathematics	1
22	Journal of Tourismology	1
23	Journal of Information Management	1
24	Journal of Advertising Research	1

29	International Journal of Research in Engineering, Science, and Management	1
30	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	1
37	Publishing Research Quarterly	1
38	International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising	1
39	Journal of Sports Media and Marketing	1
41	Innovative Marketing	1
45	International Journal of Business and Administrative Studies	1
46	International Journal of Information Management	1
47	Research for Rural Development	1
48	European Management Journal	1
49	Journal of Sponsorship	1
50	Journal of Social Network Analysis and Mining	1
53	Electronic Commerce Research and Applications	1
57	Journal of Sport Management	1
58	Computers in Human Behavior	1
59	Journal of Consumer Psychology	1
60	International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship	1
61	Journal of Digital Marketing	1
62	Sport, Business and Management	1
63	Journal of Marketing Management	1
64	Marketing Science	1

Of these studies, 5 were published in the Journal of Business Research, 4 in the Journal of Interactive Marketing, 3 in the International Journal of Advertising, 3 in the Industrial Marketing Management, and 3 in the Journal of Marketing.

A regional analysis reveals varying research emphases. Studies from Western economies (e.g., the US, UK, and Australia) predominantly investigated content marketing effectiveness in brand engagement, sponsorship strategies, and e-WOM. In contrast, Asian studies (e.g., Singapore, South Korean, and China) exhibited a stronger focus on digital transformation, social media integration, and the role of cultural adaptation in content marketing. Emerging markets such as South Africa, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia explored content marketing's influence on trust-building and customer decision-making. This geographical distribution suggests that content marketing strategies are tailored to regional market dynamics. Western research prioritizes measurable marketing outcomes and engagement metrics, whereas Asian and emerging market studies place emphasis on technological innovations and customer relationships.

The selected studies that were conducted illustrate an attempt from 2012 onwards to clarify the impact of content marketing on online customer engagement with more conclusive evidence. This was done by concentrating on the role of branded content in online customer engagement in different industries: namely 21 studies in event sponsorship, 11 in social media in general, 9 in which the industry was not specified, and 25 studies in other industries, including tourism, email marketing, e-commerce, online retail, fashion, hospitality, food & beverage, health, and banking with implications applicable in the sponsorship sector.

The findings demonstrate that while the literature up to 2018 on this topic is still insufficient, the growth of studies since then was evident. Interestingly, only 6 studies

addressed online customer engagement within the context of business-to-business (B2B), while 57 dealt with the business-to-consumer (B2C), and 3 studies focused on both contexts (Appendix A). This illustrates that in the past 12 years (2012 to 2024), more research was conducted on content marketing within the B2C context due to an increased focus on the impact of content marketing on customers.

B2B studies predominantly employed qualitative methodologies, such as case studies and in-depth interviews. Consequently, these approaches highlight content marketing's role in relationship-building, trust, and long-term business value. Moreover, conceptual models were often used to explore strategic integration of content marketing within business operations, focusing on thought leadership and customer relationship management. However, few B2B studies adopted quantitative methodologies, thereby limiting generalizability across industries.

In contrast, B2C studies extensively used quantitative approaches, leveraging surveys, statistical modelling, and experimental designs. Furthermore, a major research theme was the impact of content marketing on customer behaviour, including brand loyalty, emotional connections, and engagement metrics. In addition, mixed-methods research was more prevalent in B2C contexts, combining quantitative impact assessment with qualitative insights in customer motivations.

The dominance of quantitative methods in B2C research aligns with the need for data-driven marketing decisions. Conversely, the qualitative nature of B2B research underscores the importance of relationship-based marketing strategies, where direct engagement with stakeholders is prioritized over mass-market analytics. The table in Appendix B demonstrates on which evidence the correlation between content marketing and online customer engagement has been structured and organized (see appendices).

The results do not only clarify what content resonates with customers, but also how the content affects online customer engagement when brands meet the expectations of customers with regard to branded content. As demonstrated in the table in Appendix B, content marketing impacts online customer engagement through various ways, including sponsorship effectiveness and brand perception (enhancing sponsorship effectiveness, improving sponsoring brand perception and favourability, strengthening brand associations and visibility), brand awareness and recall (improving brand awareness, recall, and visibility, strengthening brand identity and recognition), customer relationship building and emotional connections (strengthening brand-customer relationships, fostering emotional connections and trust, enhancing fan interaction and personal connections, and building long-term customer relationships), customer behaviour and loyalty (enhancing customer experience and brand loyalty, improving customer response and interactions), engagement and interaction (enhancing customer brand engagement and participation, encouraging active involvement in content co-creation, and preventing invasive content effects), value creation and conversion (driving customer value and advocacy, increasing high-quality traffic and conversion rates), electronic word-of-mouth and purchase intention (increasing e-WOM and strengthening purchase intention through engagement), and brand trust, credibility and advocacy (increasing brand trust and transparency, enhancing credibility and customer participation, driving loyalty and brand advocacy).

The category of "sponsorship effectiveness and brand perception" is specific to how sponsorships are perceived and to their effectiveness in reaching marketing objectives. This category concentrates on measuring and improving sponsorship effectiveness rather than customer engagement alone. While engagement is about interaction, this category looks at how well sponsorships work in terms of brand exposure and strategic success. Similarly, brand awareness and recall are exposure metrics, and focus on how well a brand stays in a customer's mind. However, this differs from engagement because customers may remember a brand without directly interacting with it. In other words, while engagement is about immediate interaction, brand awareness is about lasting recognition and recall. Meanwhile, the category of "customer relationship building and emotional connections" focuses on the emotional and relational aspects of customer engagement, emphasizing long-term connections between brands and customers. Unlike general engagement, this involves deeper trust and affinity. More specifically, while engagement deals with actions such as clicks and interactions, this category emphasizes emotional bonds and long-term relationship building. On the other hand, the category of "customer behaviour and loyalty" highlights long-term customer behaviour changes driven by content marketing, such as repeat purchases

and customer retention. Unlike the categories of "sponsorship effectiveness and brand perception" or "engagement", this is about sustained loyalty. In essence, engagement measures interaction, while this category measures long-term customer commitment to a brand. Furthermore, engagement refers to active participation, such as likes, shares, comments or co-creating content. This is distinct from emotional relationship or sponsorship effectiveness because it is about immediate audience interaction. While relationship-building is about trust and emotional affinity, engagement is about direct customer actions and interactive content strategies. In addition, the category of "value creation and conversion" focuses on business outcomes, such as conversions, traffic, and measurable performance improvement. Unlike loyalty, this is about direct economic impact rather than emotional or habitual brand preference. Thus, while customer behaviour is about sustained loyalty, this category is about immediate performance gains, such as higher conversion rates and return on investment (ROI). Similarly, the category of "e-WOM and purchase intention" focuses on both behavioural responses to content marketing, but such responses differ from engagement because they focus on customer decisions and peer influence. Therefore, engagement is about interaction, whereas this category measures how content marketing influences customer recommendations and buying decisions. Lastly, the category of "trust and credibility" focuses on the key drivers of long-term brand loyalty and highlights the role of content in increasing customer trust and brand legitimacy. Unlike emotional connections, this is about building a reliable brand image. While emotional connections focus on sentiment, this category concentrates on customer confidence, transparency and advocacy.

The results also show that content marketing as a sponsorship activation strategy enhances online customer engagement by delivering valuable, relevant and interactive content that resonates with audiences. First and foremost, high-quality content that is informative, entertaining and functional attracts and retains customer attention, fostering deeper engagement. Moreover, emotional storytelling, compelling narratives, and cultural relevance help establish strong emotional connections, making content more relatable and memorable. In addition, interactivity plays a crucial role, as user-generated content (UGC), immersive experiences, and real-time updates encourage active participation and customer co-creation. Furthermore, personalization and relevance significantly impact engagement, as tailored, dynamic, and localized content ensures that messages align with audience preferences and needs in the context of international events. Equally important, trust and authenticity are strengthened through transparent, credible, and ethical content, which enhances brand loyalty and long-term customer relationships. At the same time, social influence and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) drive engagement by leveraging social media sharing, influencer collaborations, and community-driven campaigns that amplify brand reach. Additionally, technology and optimization improve content effectiveness, as data-driven strategies, SEO, cross-platform integration, and targeted advertising help brand maximize visibility and impact. Lastly, sponsorship and event-based content, such as branded content, sponsorship alignment, real-time marketing, and post-event engagement strategies, keep customers engaged beyond a single interaction. By integrating these elements, brands can effectively enhance engagement, strengthen brand perception, and influence customer behaviour, leading to lasting customer relationships and increased conversions.

The results summarized in the table in Appendix B highlight patterns and associations between content marketing strategies and various dimensions of online customer engagement, including brand loyalty, emotional connection, and e-WOM. However, it is important to emphasize that these associations should not be interpreted as evidence of causation. The included studies primarily employed observational, cross-sectional, or descriptive designs, which are inherently limited in their ability to establish causal relationships. While many of the findings suggest strong and consistent correlations, these do not account for potential confounding variables or the directionality of influence. Therefore, any influence that content marketing leads to increased customer engagement should be considered tentative and contingent upon further empirical validation through experimental or longitudinal research.

4.1 Research methodologies used in the final sample

The table in Appendix A shows the characteristics and range of methodologies and research approaches used by the authors in the sample. The findings indicate that 36 studies

adopted quantitative research, 12 were qualitative studies, 2 were mixed-methods research, and 16 were conceptual studies. The preference for empirical methodologies underscores the field's focus on quantifying engagement outcomes while recognizing the need for qualitative insights.

Surveys were the most commonly used method, accounting for a significant portion of quantitative studies. These surveys discussed customer perceptions, behaviours, and engagement metrics, providing a broad understanding of how content marketing influences customer interaction. Additionally, statistical modelling techniques, including structural equation modelling and regression analyses, were employed to establish correlations between content marketing efforts and engagement indicators such as likes, shares, and purchase intentions. A subset of studies (n=6) utilized experimental designs to assess the direct impact of content features, such as personalization, interactivity, and storytelling, on engagement levels.

Case studies and in-depth interviews were the dominant qualitative methods. These approaches provided insights into industry-specific applications of content marketing, particularly within event sponsorship and brand storytelling. Thematic analyses were used to identify emerging trends in customer responses to content marketing strategies. Moreover, systematic literature reviews contributed to the conceptual understanding of content marketing's role in digital engagement.

A smaller portion of studies combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a more comprehensive view of engagement mechanisms. These studies integrated survey data with case studies or content analysis, allowing research to validate findings across different methodological lenses.

Several studies employed a conceptual framework approach, utilizing literature reviews, theoretical discussions, and conceptual model development to examine content marketing's effectiveness. These studies provided foundational theories and identified gaps in empirical research, guiding future studies toward more robust methodological designs.

To classify the selected studies into quantitative, qualitative, and conceptual categories, we applied methodological criteria grounded in academic research standards. Specifically, studies were categorized as quantitative if they utilized structured data collection methods, such as surveys, experiments, or statistical modelling, to analyse numerical data; qualitative if they employed interviews, case studies, thematic analyses, or document reviews to explore subjective insights; and conceptual if they primarily presented theoretical frameworks, narrative literature review, or model development without empirical data collection. In cases where a study combined qualitative and quantitative methods, it was classified as mixed methods.

The initial categorization was conducted through a combination of AI-based content screening and manual review by the lead researcher. However, inter-rater reliability testing was not conducted, and a second independent reviewer was not used to cross-validate these classifications, which represents a methodological limitation, and this will be discussed in the limitations section. Nonetheless, every effort was made to ensure transparency and consistency in applying classification criteria across the reviewed literature.

5. Discussion

This scoping review demonstrated that there are numerous studies on content marketing, which is in contrast to the academic perception that there is a paucity of such research in the body of existing literature. Nevertheless, fewer studies are available with evidence on the impact of content marketing on online customer engagement, which has emerged as a crucial lens through which this digital marketing strategy can be examined in more detail. The process followed in this study makes it clear that since 2012 there has been significant increase in the body of literature on content marketing.

Although the topic is still not a mature field yet, the concept of using content marketing to share branded content on social media has gained traction and understanding since 2012. Additionally, the locations where data was collected in the final sample represent most continents, indicating a rise in scholarly interest worldwide (Appendix A). The studies included in the final sample used a variety of methodologies to verify the correlation between content

marketing and online customer engagement with empirical data although previous research has recognized this relationship.

The findings from this scoping review reveal that content marketing and online customer engagement have a multi-faceted relationship. Instead of a one-size-fits-all strategy, the studies show that engagement is context-dependent, and vary across content types, distribution channels, brand objectives, and customer demographics.

Numerous studies highlight how content marketing enhances sponsorship effectiveness, with message clarity, emotional alignment, and interactivity being key success factors (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019; Meenaghan & O'Sullivan, 2020). When branded content is contextually relevant and seamlessly integrated into the sponsorship experience, it fosters positive customer attitudes toward both the brand and the sponsored property (Olson & Thjømøe, 2019). Additionally, authenticity and transparency are critical to the sponsorship success, as customers are more likely to engage when brands demonstrate sincerity in their messaging (Human et al., 2018). The results suggest that immersive and emotional storytelling, particularly when connected to cultural and social narratives, increases brand recall and builds customer trust (Close & Lacey, 2013; Kumar, 2022). Brands must go beyond simple sponsorship exposure and instead create experience-driven content that aligns with their audience's emotions and values.

Brand awareness and recall are important preconditions for customer engagement. Studies show that interactive and multimedia content significantly improves brand recognition (Smith & Stewart, 2015; Keller, 2016). Moreover, a brand's chances of staying at the forefront of customer consciousness are increased by the synergistic effect of multi-platform content distribution (social media, blogs, video, and influencer collaborations) (Jacob & Johnson, 2021). However, mere exposure is insufficient, content must be relevant and unique to establish lasting brand associations and to prevent its invasive effects (Schmitt, 2012). Emotional and values-driven narratives, rather than solely promotional content, are more effective in shaping customer attitudes (Jaitly & Gautam, 2021; Barry & Gironda, 2019). Brands should focus on storytelling, multi-channel optimization, and personalization to reinforce brand identity and to deepen customer recall.

Emotional engagement plays a central role in fostering long-term customer relationships. According to studies, narratives that inspire feelings of nostalgia, aspiration, or social belonging are crucial for increasing engagement (Madden & Naylor, 2018). In addition, when content reflects personal relevance and interactive experiences, customer-brand relationships are strengthened (Taiminen & Ranaweera, 2019). Real-time engagement through experiential campaigns, live content and user-generated contributions creates a sense of belonging (Chatterjee et al., 2024). Brands should humanize their content strategies by emphasizing relatable, emotional, and participatory storytelling that strengthens personal connections.

A significant number of studies reveal that content marketing affects customer decision-making and long-term loyalty (Ho et al., 2020; Xie & Lou, 2020). Engaging content boosts brand trust and encourages recurrent engagement when it is in line with customer needs and expectations (Dwivedi et al., 2023). When brands adopt customer-centric content strategies that prioritize value creation rather than direct promotion, loyalty is further reinforced (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016; Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Long-term brand commitment is improved by the use of interactive features such as gamification, real-time updates, and two-way communication (Wang & McCarthy, 2021). Brands should craft content that nurtures post-purchase engagement, thereby reinforcing trust, exclusivity, and brand advocacy, rather than focusing solely on acquisition.

Customer engagement and participation are significantly influenced by highly personalized and interactive content formats (Bleier & Eisenbeiss, 2015; Gillooly et al., 2017). The findings suggest that brands that actively involve customers in content co-creation achieve higher engagement levels. In addition, some brands leverage AI-driven personalization, real-time marketing, and predictive analytics to create customized experiences increase engagement (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Repovienė & Pažėraitė, 2019). Personalization should go beyond simple recommendations, and brands must focus on adaptive, behaviour-driven content strategies that evolve with customer preferences.

The reviewed studies confirm that valuable and shareable content increases customer advocacy, particularly through electronic-word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (Al-Gasawneh & Al-Adamat, 2020; Pektas & Hassan, 2020). When customers perceive content as credible and

informative, they are more likely to share it within their networks, thus influencing purchase intention. Interestingly, studies highlight that social impact and ethical considerations in content marketing strengthen customer trust and advocacy (Bu et al., 2021; Mohammad, 2020). Sustainability messaging, transparency, and influencer credibility play significant roles in shaping purchasing behaviour. Brands should integrate social proof, influencer collaborations, and value-based messaging to enhance word-of-mouth marketing.

Trust is an essential component of engagement. Studies demonstrate that transparent, data-driven and ethical content strategies increase brand credibility and advocacy (Malthouse et al., 2013; Ahmed, 2019). Misleading content or exaggerated claims negatively affect long-term trust and engagement (Mohammad, 2020). Furthermore, content reflecting corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts, diversity, and inclusivity strengthens brand perception and customer advocacy (Carter & Eastman, 2020). Brands should prioritize transparency, authenticity, and ethical storytelling to sustain engagement and long-term loyalty.

This study strengthens several theoretical perspectives on customer engagement, including the uses and gratifications theory, social exchange, and relationship marketing principles. The findings suggest that content marketing serves as an engagement mechanism by fulfilling customers' informational, emotional, and social needs.

6. Implications

6.1 Research implications

The findings of this scoping review offer multiple implications for the theoretical development of content marketing and customer engagement literature. First, this study underscores the urgent need to advance content marketing as a distinct theoretical construct within digital marketing. Despite the increasing scholarly attention, the boundaries between content marketing and social media marketing remain blurred (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Future research should establish a distinction between these conceptually distinct constructs, both of which influence online customer engagement through different mechanisms. Establishing this distinction is essential to refining existing engagement theories and avoiding conceptual redundancy.

Second, the review reveals that content marketing's effectiveness is likely contingent on contextual factors, including industry characteristics (e.g., education, finance) and regional settings (e.g., South America, Africa). Therefore, we propose that the relationship between content marketing and online customer engagement is moderated by industry type and regional cultural dynamics. Integrating such contingencies into theoretical models will improve their generalizability and relevance.

Third, the findings highlight the importance of C2C content marketing as an emergent but under-theorized phenomenon. Current engagement theories predominantly focus on B2C dynamics, yet customers increasingly co-create, share, and discuss branded content. We suggest that customer-to customer interactions mediate and amplify the effects of content marketing on customer engagement. Future research should incorporate C2C interactions into content marketing frameworks to reflect the evolving role of customers as active agents in the engagement process (Geng et al., 2020).

Fourth, the review suggests that cross-disciplinary approaches can advance engagement theories. Bridging marketing with psychology, communication, and data science could help theorize how branded content triggers psychological mechanisms such as trust, emotional resonance, and perceived value. This suggests that content marketing influences customer engagement through affective and cognitive mediators, including trust, emotional attachment, and perceived content value.

Lastly, the field suffers from a scarcity of qualitative insights. Future research adopting qualitative and mixed-method designs could contribute to theory-building by capturing the lived experiences and emotional dimensions of engagement with branded content. This would facilitate the development of richer, customer-centric engagement models that are grounded in empirical realities rather than abstract assumptions.

6.2 Practical implications

This review provides actionable insights for practitioners aiming to enhance customer engagement through content marketing. First, content development strategies should be tailored across different platforms. On social media, marketers should prioritize short-form, interactive, and visually engaging content (e.g., reels, stories, polls), whereas long-form educational or storytelling content may be more suitable for websites, blogs, or email marketing. Additionally, adopting multimedia formats (videos, interactive infographics, and AR/VR experiences), and encouraging user-generated content (UGC) can foster deeper engagement.

To measure the effectiveness of content marketing, practitioners should employ a comprehensive set of metrics. Recommended indicators include engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments, and watch time), customer sentiment analysis, conversion rate, e-WOM frequency, and customer lifetime value (CLV). Beyond basic analytics, brands should incorporate sentiment analysis and qualitative feedback to capture customer perceptions.

Integration of content marketing into broader marketing strategies is essential. Content efforts should align with brand positioning, sponsorship activation, and relationship marketing strategies to maximize synergy. Content should not operate in isolation, but as a vital part of the marketing mix, campaigns, events, and influencer partnerships.

Resource allocation decisions should consider the platform's characteristics and target audience behaviour. Brands with limited budgets may prioritize high-engagement platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram) and may focus on UGC and micro-influencers, while larger firms can invest in AI-driven personalization, cross-platform content orchestration, and advanced data analytics capabilities.

This review also provides insights tailored to various sectors. In event sponsorship contexts, sponsors should integrate interactive and real-time content (e.g., live streams, behind-the-scenes footage) to foster audience involvement during events. For B2B contexts, content marketing should emphasize educational, problem-solving, and trust-building content (e.g., white papers, case studies) to support long-term relationships, whereas B2C strategies may focus more on emotional storytelling, entertainment, and peer influence.

Industry-specific applications are also crucial. For instance, in sports and entertainment, immersive and gamified content (e.g., fantasy leagues, AR filters) can significantly increase engagement. In finance and education, content should prioritize credibility, clarity, and informative value. Additionally, organizational size influences content strategy; smaller firms should leverage cost-effective methods such as influencer partnerships and UGC, while larger corporations can allocate resources toward more sophisticated content ecosystems, including AI-powered personalization and cross-channel integration.

For effective performance management, practitioners should adopt clearly defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) such as engagement rate, brand sentiment, share of voice, conversion rate, and customer advocacy (e.g., Net Promoter Score). Customer engagement assessment should include both quantitative metrics (e.g., interaction rates, dwell time) and qualitative insights (e.g., customer feedback, content resonance studies).

To assess the return on investment (ROI) of content marketing, brands should link content performance to strategic objectives such as sales uplift, lead generation, and brand equity enhancement. This can be achieved through multi-touch attribution models and econometric analysis.

Finally, monitoring and optimization should be continuous. Firms should implement real-time dashboards and analytics tools to tract content performance, identify underperforming content, and adjust strategies dynamically. Predictive analytics and A/B testing are recommended to systematically optimize the effectiveness of content marketing.

6. Conclusions

This scoping review has provided a comprehensive analysis of the impact of content marketing on online customer engagement. By synthesizing 66 studies across 25 countries, this review identifies knowledge gaps, highlights theoretical contributions, and underscores practical implications for both researchers and practitioners. The findings emphasize the growing role of content marketing in digital engagement, customer relationship building, and

business growth while acknowledging the complexities of measuring its effectiveness across different contexts.

The review confirms that content marketing is instrumental in fostering customer engagement by enhancing brand interaction, trust, and loyalty. However, significant gaps remain in understanding how content marketing strategies vary across industries, cultural contexts, and digital platforms. There is also a need for a more nuanced approach to measuring engagement metrics, given the diverse and evolving nature of digital interactions. Moreover, the study highlights the underexplored relationship between content personalization and customer behaviour, stressing the importance of strategic content delivery mechanisms that align with audience preferences. Existing research tends to focus on general outcomes, but deeper insights into customer segmentation, emotional engagement, and conversion metrics are needed to strengthen practical applications.

For practitioners, the findings emphasize the importance of designing and executing tailored content marketing strategies that align with industry-specific needs. Organizations should implement clear guidelines for content creation, distribution, and performance measurement to ensure consistency and effectiveness. Businesses should develop frameworks that help build thought leadership and credibility through valuable content while enhancing audience engagement through interactive and experiential strategies. Leveraging data-driven insights to refine social media content and maximize customer interactions is essential, as is utilizing personalized content to build long-term brand loyalty and trust. Additionally, brands must develop practical assessment frameworks to evaluate effectiveness of content marketing through integrating standardized performance measurement models with key engagement metrics such as click-through rates, time spent on content, conversion rates, and social sharing behaviours.

To maximize the impact of content marketing, future research should integrate findings with established marketing theories and proven business practices. Acknowledging industry standards and adapting to technological advancements will ensure that academic insights remain relevant and actionable for practitioners. Businesses must also address contemporary challenges in content marketing, particularly in digital environments. Issues such as content saturation, declining organic reach, and increasing customer scepticism require adaptive strategies that prioritize authenticity, transparency, and user-generated content. Furthermore, demonstrating the measurable value of content marketing initiatives is critical. Firms should establish clear KPIs that align with their strategic objectives, thereby ensuring that content marketing efforts translate into tangible benefits such as increased brand awareness, customer retention, and revenue growth.

AI-driven content personalization, immersive media experiences such as AR and VR, and blockchain-powered transparency are emerging trends in digital marketing, and present new avenues for research and practice. Brands should develop adaptive strategies to navigate these shifts effectively and stay ahead in the competitive digital landscape. Additionally, the development of a standardized framework for evaluating content marketing success would benefit both researchers and practitioners. This framework should incorporate industry best practices, data-driven insights, and flexible models that adapt to changing customer behaviours. By strengthening both theoretical contributions and practical applications, this review provides a foundation for advancing content marketing research and improving its strategic implementation in the digital marketplace. The insights derived from this study will aid scholars in furthering academic discourse and empower practitioners with actionable strategies to optimize customer engagement through content marketing.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the scope of the included studies may not fully capture the rapid evolution of digital marketing trends. Second, reliance on existing literature may introduce publication bias, as studies with positive findings are more likely to be published. Third, methodological inconsistencies across reviewed studies may impact the reliability of synthesized conclusions. Fourth, inter-rater reliability testing was not conducted, and a second independent reviewer was not used to cross-validate the research methodologies classification. Furthermore, future reviews should consider employing intercoder agreement measures, such as Cohen's kappa, to enhance the classification reliability of reviewed research methodologies. Nonetheless, every effort was made to ensure transparency and consistency in applying classification criteria across the reviewed literature. Finally, a key limitation of this review lies in the nature of the evidence available. The majority of the studies included are based on observational or cross-sectional data and do not employ

experimental or longitudinal designs capable of testing causal relationships. As for presented results, the review identifies correlational, rather than causal associations between content marketing and online customer engagement. Although the consistency of these associations across diverse contexts and industries strengthens the credibility of the observed relationships, the findings cannot rule out the influence of external or unmeasured variables.

While the findings support content marketing's effectiveness, alternative explanations warrant considerations. External factors such as market saturation, platform algorithms, and customer fatigue may influence engagement levels. Moreover, future theoretical exploration should further investigate how digital storytelling and interactive content reshape engagement dynamics across industries.

The predominance of studies focused on developed economies limits the generalizability of insights to emerging markets. Future research should address these gaps by conducting comparative studies across diverse economic and cultural settings. Future research should also explore content marketing's role in underrepresented sectors such as education and finance. Additionally, more studies are needed from South America and Africa to enhance the global understanding of content marketing's impact. Cross-disciplinary collaborations between marketing, psychology, and data science could yield innovative insights into customer behaviour and engagement strategies. Moreover, a clear distinction between content marketing and social media marketing should be established to refine theoretical frameworks and practical applications. Future research should also include more qualitative and mixed-method designs to contribute to theory-building by gaining insights from customers' and practitioners' experiences regarding engagement and content creation. Furthermore, and as mentioned previously, employing intercoder agreement measures, such as Cohen's kappa, will enhance the classification of research methodologies used in the articles' final sample. Finally, future research should prioritize the use of experimental designs, time-series data, or longitudinal panel analyses to examine whether content marketing directly causes improvements in customer engagement outcomes.

Finally, future research should address methodological gaps by incorporating more qualitative and longitudinal studies to capture the dynamic evolution of content marketing strategies and their effects on customer engagement. Scholars should explore mixed method approaches that integrate quantitative performance metrics with qualitative insights from customer behaviour studies. Further theoretical development is necessary to establish stronger conceptual frameworks linking content marketing strategies with engagement outcomes. Investigating interdisciplinary perspectives, such as the integration of psychological and behavioural economic principles, could deepen the understanding of how content marketing influences customer decision-making. Additionally, geographical expansion of research into underrepresented regions such as South America and Africa would contribute to a more globally inclusive understanding of content marketing dynamics. The digital landscape varies significantly between regions, and future studies should explore how economic, social, and cultural factors shape content marketing effectiveness.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Characteristics of the studies included in the final sample. Source: Author's own

No.	Author(s)	Journal/ conference proceeding	Objective(s)	Methodology	Context / Industry	Study's location
1	Ho et al. (2020)	Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	Develop a conceptual framework that identifies content marketing practices, particularly how to create compelling content	Conceptual, qualitative, case studies, interviews, content analyses	B2C, fashion, food & beverage, agro-manufacturing	Singapore
2	Cornwell & Kwon (2019)	Journal of Advertising	Emphasize the role of content marketing in creating meaningful connections with diverse audiences during international events. Highlight the need for immersive and culturally resonant experiences to engage tech-savvy audiences effectively	Systematic review, qualitative	B2C, events, sponsorship	-
3	Lou & Xie (2021)	International Journal of Advertising	Understand how digital content marketing increases customer experience and brand loyalty	A one-factor (product involvement: high versus low), online experimental design, quantitative	B2C, restaurant chains, apparel, sportswear, airline, automobile, and insurance	Global (not specified)
4	Al-Gasawneh & Al-Adamat (2020)	Management Science Letters	Examine the impact of content marketing on purchase intention and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) as a mediating variable	Online questionnaire, quantitative	B2C, green products	Jordan
5	Kim & Song (2018)	Journal of Interactive Advertising	Investigate how sponsorship disclosure and content relevance influence customer response to sponsored content	Online experiment, quantitative	B2C, Sponsorship	United States
6	Huang & Liu (2021)	*Journal of Interactive Marketing*	Explore the role of digital transformation in shaping sponsorship activation strategies during global events. Investigating how brands can use real-time engagement tool, such as social media, apps, and virtual reality (VR) to create immersive content and engage international audiences during sports events	Qualitative, quantitative (social media metrics analysis), mixed methods	B2C, sport events, sponsorship	China
7	Close & Lacey (2013)	Sport Marketing Quarterly)	Investigate how customer motivates communicate with sponsorship effects and how this communication affects	Field survey, moderation analysis, quantitative	B2C, sponsorship	Global (not specified)

			customer engagement through social media activations			
8	Human et al. (2018)	International Journal of Emerging markets	Consider the effect of content marketing on sponsorship-response favorability in the South African energy drink market	Survey after treatment, structural equations model, quantitative	B2C, sponsorship, energy drinks	South Africa
9	Järvinen & Taiminen (2016)	Industrial Marketing Management	Investigate the organizational processes for developing valuable and timely content to meet customer needs and for integrating content marketing with B2B selling processes	Single case study approach, qualitative	B2B, not specified industry	Finland
10	Gümüş (2017)	Academic Research International	Determine the content leading to consumers following brands, quitting brand following, establishing interaction with brands, and sharing brand content	Focus groups, qualitative	B2C Social media	Turkey
11	Cornwell & Katz (2020)	Journal of Business Research	Develop a framework for sponsorship-linked marketing strategies used by global brands, focusing on how these strategies leverage content marketing to build brand equity, customer loyalty, and customer engagement across various international markets	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, events, sponsorship	-
12	Bunpis & Haron (2014)	International SME Conference (ISMEC 2014)	Study the background knowledge about content marketing on customer brand engagement	Documentary research, qualitative	B2C, health and beauty	Thailand
13	Smith & Stewart (2015)	Sport Management Review	Explore how social media is reshaping sponsorships in global events. Highlight that digital tools facilitate global reach, immediate customer engagement, and the ability to tailor content across different cultures and regions	Conceptual, critical review	B2C, events, sponsorship	-
14	Prasetya & Susilo (2022)	Journal Komunikasi Profesional	Determine whether or not content marketing influences consumer purchase intentions through customer engagement	Online questionnaire, quantitative	B2C, social media	Indonesia
15	Taiminen & Ranaweera (2019)	European Journal of Marketing	Explore how digital content marketing leads to value-laden trusted brand relationships	Online survey, covariance-based structural equation modeling, quantitative	B2B, email marketing	Finland

16	Yang & Ling (2024)	Journal of Digital Economy	**Investigate how interactivity and vividness, key attributes of Augmented Reality (AR), influence consumer perceptions, specifically media usefulness and media enjoyment**	Survey, structural equation modeling, quantitative	B2C, online retail	Global (not specified)
17	Poradova (2020)	SHS Web of Conferences Globalization and its Socio-economic Consequences	Examine how a global content marketing strategy can be used to influence user interests and its important communication with customers	Survey, statistical analysis, quantitative	B2C, industry not specified	Czech Republic
18	Jacob & Johnson (2021)	Colombo Business Journal	Provide a conceptual analysis of digital content marketing	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, social media	-
19	Achen & Jiang (2021)	Sport Marketing Quarterly	Investigate how content marketing used in sponsorship activations contributes to building brand equity in global sports events, focusing on how sponsorships, in these events, drive customer engagement and long-term brand loyalty	Surveys, statistical analysis, quantitative	B2C, sport events, sponsorship	Global (not specified)
20	De Vries (2022)	Journal of Business Research	**Develop a comprehensive research agenda that examines customer activities, consequences, and contingencies throughout the customer journey. The study seeks to understand how different factors influence customer behavior and outcomes at various stages.**	Conceptual, literature review	B2B and B2C, insutry not specified	-
21	Kumar (2022)	African Diaspora Journal of Mathematics	Explore the profound influence of storytelling in content marketing on critical dimensions of consumer-brand relationships	Online survey, quantitative	B2C, social media	Global (not specified)
22	Pektas & Hassan (2020)	Journal of Tourismology	Reveal the effect of digital content on tourists' purchase intention using the persuasion knowledge	Persuasion knowledge model, purposive sampling, quantitative	B2C, tourism	Turkey
23	Dwivedi et al. (2023)	Journal of Information Management	**Provide a comprehensive overview of current trends in digital and social media marketing and propose future research directions.**	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, social media	-

24	Close (2016)	Journal of Advertising Research	Explore the role of digital and social media platforms in customer engagement in the context of sponsorship marketing	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, sponsorship	-
25	Bu et al. (2021)	Australian Marketing Journal	Understand how the social impact of digital content marketing in food tourism leads to electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) communication	Online survey, structural equation modeling, quantitative	B2C, tourism	Australia
26	Meenaghan & O'Sullivan (2020)	International Journal of Advertising	Emphasize the importance of content marketing for sponsorship activation, noting how digital platforms offer measurable outcomes and enable sponsors to reach a global audience with localized content. Argue that the real-time feedback provided by digital tools enhances brand engagement during international events	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, sponsorship	Ireland
27	Hollebeek & Macky (2019)	Journal of Interactive Marketing	Develop a conceptual framework that identifies important consumer-based digital content marketing antecedents	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, industry not specified	New Zeanland
28	Madden & Naylor (2018)	International Journal of Advertising	Explore how brand authenticity plays a role in international marketing, particularly in the context of content marketing and customer engagement, focusing on how businesses can craft authentic messages to resonate with audiences	Case studies, qualitative	B2C, events, sponsorship	Global (not specified)
29	Krishnaprabha & Tarunika (2020)	International Journal of Research in Engineering, Science, and Management	Investigate the effects of digital content marketing on brand awareness	Survey, quantitative	B2C, industry not specified	India
30	Magno & Cassia (2020)	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	Propose and test a model to explain how a firm's thought leadership improves its customer relationship performance	Covariance-based structural equation modeling, quantitative	B2B, industry not specified	Italy
31	Olson & Thjømøe (2019)	European Journal of Marketing	Analyze how content marketing strategies help sponsors reach audiences across different countries by providing real-time engagement and performance metrics. Explore how digital strategies facilitate effective sponsorship	Cross-national survey, statistical analysis, quantitative	B2C, events, sponsorship	Norway

32	Zhang & Kim (2022)	Journal of International Consumer Marketing	**Assess how cross-cultural factors affect customer engagement and purchase intentions in international markets**	Survey, structural equation modeling, quantitative	B2C, digital marketing	Asia & Europe
33	Xie & Lou (2020)	Journal of Interactive Advertising	Understand the mechanisms of luxury content marketing in brand building	Quasi-experimental design, quantitative	B2C, luxury	Global (not specified)
34	Thompson & Malaviya (2013)	Journal of Marketing	Investigate how customers' awareness of their peers' participation in creating ads influences their engagement with these ads	Experimental design, quantitative	B2C, social media advertising	Global (not specified)
35	Keller (2016)	Journal of Advertising	Explore how integrated marketing communications (IMC) can be used to enhance the effectiveness of content marketing during sponsorship activation. Understand how brands can align multiple channels of communication to create a cohesive and engaging marketing experience	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, not specified	-
36	Keller (2020)	Journal of International Marketing	Examine how brands must adapt their sponsorship content to match the values and expectations of different cultures to drive engagement during international events	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, events, sponsorship	-
37	Pulizzi (2012)	*Publishing Research Quarterly*	Detail the history of content marketing, the opportunities, and six differences that separate good to great content marketers, and the role of storytelling in content marketing	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, industry not specified	-
38	Jaitly & Gautam (2021)	International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising	Examine the perceptions of agencies for opting social media influencers and their role in customer engagement and brand awareness, and assess different methods adopted by these influencers for influencing customers using a systematic review	Systematic review, qualitative	B2C, social media	-
39	Lee & Park (2024)	Journal of Business Research	**Investigate how different dimensions of interactivity (two-way communication, participation, joint problem-solving) influence customer engagement**	Survey, quantitative	B2C, sharing economy, digital services	South Korea
40	Wang & McCarthy (2021)	Australian Marketing Journal	Examine how the type of message, the post format, and the source of the content	Content analysis, multiple regressions, quantitative	B2C, reail banks	Australia & Singapore

			influence customer engagement with retail bank brands			
41	Ahmed (2019)	Innovative Marketing	Investigate the multi-dimensional relationships among content marketing, loyalty, trust, and customer engagement	Survey, simple random sampling, quantitative	B2C, private hospitals	Saudi Arabia
42	Carter & Eastman (2020)	International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship	Explore how content marketing strategies can be tailored for global sports events to maximize cultural alignment and audience participation	Case studies, qualitative	B2C, sport events, sponsorship	United States
43	Barry & Gironda (2019)	Industrial Marketing Management	Test the framework of thought leadership that drives a marketer's social capital	Conceptual, grounded theory, quantitative	B2B, professional services	United States
44	Holliman & Rowley (2014)	Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	Explore the emerging role of digital content marketing. Understand how digital content is used as an inbound marketing strategy to replace interruptive marketing techniques and its best practices	Semi-structured interviews, qualitative.	B2B, social media	United Kingdom
45	Mohammad (2020)	International Journal of Business and Administrative studies	Examine the effect of product transparency on consumer trust to increase the effectiveness of content marketing	Online survey, quantitative	B2C, food & beverage	Singapore & Taiwan
46	Chatterje et al. (2024)	International Journal of Information Management	**Explore the applications, challenges, and future directions of artificial intelligence in marketing practices.**	Literature review, conceptual	B2B and B2C, information management and marketing technology	-
47	Repovien é & Pažėraitė (2019)	Research for Rural Development	Determine which content marketing decisions create the biggest value for the customer in social networks	Q-methodology, qualitative and quantitative (mixed methods)	B2C, organic food production	Lithuania
48	Sabate et al. (2014)	European Management Journal	Shed light on those factors that are expected to impact Facebook branded post popularity	Multiple regression analysis, quantitative	B2C, social media	Spain
49	Müller & Möller (2021)	Journal of Sponsorship	Investigate how content shared on social media by event sponsors can influence customer engagement, particularly how specific types of content encourage higher levels of customer interaction and	Survey, statistical analysis, quantitative	B2C, events, sponsorship	Germany

			engagement with sponsorships during live events			
50	Cvijikj & Michahelles, (2013)	Journal of Social Network Analysis and Mining	Analyze the factors influencing online customer engagement on Facebook pages, particularly the impact of the post's characteristics	Data mining, regression analysis, content analysis, quantitative	B2C, social media	Switzerland
51	Eigenraam et al. (2021)	Journal of Interactive Marketing	**Examine how the perceived authenticity of online customer engagement initiatives influences consumer responses, considering the nature of the content and brand perception**	Experimental design, quantitative	B2C, social media	Netherlands
52	Wang et al. (2019)	Industrial Marketing Management	Hypothesize that a B2B service provider obtains more sales opportunities from accounts that engage more with its content marketing activities	Fitting random-effects negative binomial regression models with 4 years of panel data from a large international consulting service provider, quantitative	B2B, professional services	United States
53	Varnali (2014)	Electronic Commerce Research and Applications	Explore various aspects of mobile marketing and its effectiveness, including how mobile advertising content, such as SMS campaigns, can impact consumer behavior	Online survey, questionnaires, statistical analysis, quantitative	B2C, mobile advertising	Turkey
54	Sharma & Kwon (2021)	International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship	Examine how online interactivity, such as quizzes, live polls, and gamified experiences, enhances the relationship between sponsors and event audiences	Surveys, statistical analysis, quantitative	B2C, sport events, sponsorship	United States
55	Bigné & Andreu (2018)	Journal of Business Research	Investigate how effective content strategies can enhance brand image and increase customer participation in cultural events, thereby boosting customer engagement	Survey, statistical analysis, quantitative	B2C, cultural events, sponsorship	Spain
56	Malthouse et al. (2013)	Journal of Interactive Marketing	Introduce the concept of social customer relationship management and discuss how social media is transforming the way companies interact with customers	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, retail, consumer goods, technology, and services	-

57	Achen & Zhao (2018)	Journal of Sport Management	Examine how sports organizations utilize content marketing to enhance the effectiveness of their sponsorship strategies, particularly techniques, such as storytelling and exclusive behind-the-scenes footage and their impact on online customer engagement and customer loyalty	Survey, statistical analysis, quantitative	B2C, sport events, sponsorship	United States
58	Lim et al. (2015)	Computers in Human Behavior	**Investigate the synergistic effects of digital video advertising across television, internet, and mobile platforms on advertising effectiveness.**	Experimental design, quantitative	B2C, social media	United States & South Korea
59	Schmitt (2012)	Journal of Consumer Psychology	Understand consumer psychology related to brands and discuss various psychological constructs that are essential for understanding how consumers interact with and perceive brands	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, industry not specified	-
60	Mastromartino & Naraine (2021)	International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship	**Assess the effectiveness of social media strategies employed by professional sports organizations during periods lacking live content, focusing on sponsor engagement.**	Content analysis, experimental design, mixed methods	B2C, event, sponsorship	United States & Canada
61	Lee & Lee (2020)	Journal of Digital Marketing	*Explore the role of social media marketing activities in shaping customer engagement and brand equity*	Survey, questionnaires, statistical analysis, quantitative	B2C, consumer goods and services	South Korea
62	Gillooly et al. (2017)	Sport, Business and Management	**Develop a typology of social media content used in sponsorship activation and examine how it aligns with user motivations.**	Content analysis, qualitative	B2C, event sponsorship	United Kingdom
63	Filo et al. (2015)	Journal of Marketing Management	Discuss how content strategies like fan-created content, social media integration and exclusive access can enhance engagement and increase brand loyalty	Survey, statistical analysis, quantitative	B2C, sport events, sponsorship	Australia
64	Bleier & Eisenbeiss (2015)	Marketing Science	Explore the effectiveness of personalized online advertising on customer engagement with online stores	Field and lab experiments, quantitative	B2C, e-commerce, retail	Germany
65	Lemon & Verhoef (2016)	Journal of Marketing	Synthesize existing research and provide a comprehensive understanding of how customer experience is formed and	Conceptual, literature review	B2C, B2B, e-commerce	-

			evolves across the entire customer journey			
66	Anett et al. (2022)	Journal of Business Research	Analyze the long-term market performance of organic keywords in search engine optimization (SEO) and propose strategies for effective keyword selection	Web analytics, quantitative	B2C, e-commerce	Global (not specified)

Appendix B. Evidence of correlation between content marketing and online customer engagement. Source: Author's own

Study No.	Author and publication year	Content marketing's impact(s) on online customer engagement	Reason(s) of impact
1	Ho et al. (2020)	Building relationships	Valuable content consumed and shared by customers
2	Cornwell & Kwon (2019)	Enhancing sponsorship effectiveness, amplifying engagement, and strengthening brand-customer relationships	Resonant narratives and experiences, consistent, contextually relevant and value-driven content, user-generated content, and interactivity across digital platforms
3	Lou & Xie (2021)	Improving brand loyalty and customer brand experience	Content generating informative, entertaining, social, and functional value for customers
4	Al-Gasawneh & Al-Adamat (2020)	Increasing the electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and affecting purchase intention	Appealing content leads customers to share their positive experiences with others through e-WOM, which raises their interest towards green products
5	Kim & Song (2018)	Enhancing customer engagement and brand perception of the sponsoring brand	Experience-centric content and sponsored UGC (user-generated content)
6	Huang & Liu (2021)	Improving customer engagement and sponsorship effectiveness	Personalized, tailored, dynamic and interactive content, real-time updates like live coverage of events, cross-cultural relevance, and integration of technology and data analytics
7	Close & Lacey (2013)	Asymmetrical impact lies in increasing brand awareness and positive associations for sponsors and enhancing the credibility and increasing customer participation for the event	Sponsored content alignment with the event's theme, message clarity and relevance, and emotional connection
8	Human et al. (2018)	Increasing sponsorship favorability among customers	Sponsor's sincerity and attitude shown in the content
9	Järvinen & Taiminen (2016)	Enhancing purchase intention	Customer-centric content that creates and delivers valuable and timely content as part of the organizational processes. Prioritizing customers' needs and problems over promoting the company's offerings
10	Gümüş (2017)	Improving consumer brand response	Content in line with the customer's expectations. A strong understanding of the audience
11	Cornwell & Katz (2020)	Increasing participation, improving customer engagement, emotional connections, and brand recall	Leveraging real-time interactions, user-generated content, cultural and contextual relevance, and technology integration

12	Bunpis & Haron (2014)	Enhancing customer engagement	Interest stimulating content
13	Smith & Stewart (2015)	Increasing deep, personal and communal connections with fans, and brand loyalty (sport enthusiasm as a potential mediator)	Storytelling through narratives leveraging the emotional and passionate connection fans have with sport, real-time marketing, interactive and experiential content, as well as cultural and contextual relevance
14	Prasetya & Susilo (2022)	Enhancing purchase intention	Engaging and relevant content, while customer engagement as a mediating variable in the impact of content marketing on purchase intention
15	Taiminen & Ranaweera (2019)	Enhancing customer engagement, increasing brand trust and building relationships	Helpful brand actions
16	Yang & Ling (2024)	Increasing customer engagement and enhancing brand perception	Interactive and immersive content, aligning content with audience values, delivering real-time content, and emotional storytelling
17	Poradova (2020)	Improving customer brand response	Interesting and valuable content, which bolsters customer relationships thanks to strong personal connections between the brand and customers
18	Jacob & Johnson (2021)	Promoting customer engagement and building brand awareness	Relevant, valuable, consistent, reliable, entertaining and interactive content by selecting the appropriate content formats
19	Achen & Jiang (2021)	Strengthening brand associations, enhancing perceived brand quality, fostering emotional connections, increasing brand loyalty, and amplifying customer engagement	Value-driven content, interactive content formats, emotional and relatable narratives, optimizing content for different platforms, and cultural and demographic relevance
20	De Vries et al. (2022)	Fostering stronger connections with the target audience	Compelling and relevant content
21	Kumar (2022)	Fostering customer engagement, building relationships and lasting brand loyalty.	Storytelling through compelling narratives that resonate with customers' values, emotions, and aspirations
22	Pektas & Hassan (2020	Enhancing electronic word-of-mouth and purchase intention	Credible and trustworthy digital communications that shape tourists' behaviors
23	Dwivedi et al. (2023)	Increasing brand transparency, enhancing customer reach, and fostering customer engagement	Authentic content, emotional narratives, targeted audience segmentation, real-time content, innovative content formats, and data-driven optimization
24	Close (2016)	Enhancing customer engagement, building emotional connections with the sponsoring	Personalized and multimedia content, storytelling, interactive campaigns, UGC, and social sharing

		brand, driving active customer participation, and increasing reach	
25	Bu et al. (2021)	Increasing electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM)	Content with a social impact
26	Meenaghan & O'Sullivan (2020)	Increasing customer engagement and enhancing sponsorship effectiveness	Authentic and transparent content, assessing the engagement and brand experience metrics rather than media exposure and sponsorship awareness metrics, content relevance, and interactive sponsorship activations
27	Hollebeek & Macky (2019)	Altering brand attitude, increasing brand trust, adding customer value, and enhancing customer engagement	Content's nature and execution. Clear and appealing content. Content focusing on the user value enabling him to quit at any stage of the purchasing process
28	Madden & Naylor (2018)	Fostering emotional connections, improving customer-brand links, and increasing customer engagement	Personalized content, storytelling, visual and interactive content, real-time marketing, user-generated content, and sustaining post-event engagement
29	Krishnaprabha & Tarunika (2020)	Creating brand awareness and increasing brand loyalty	Content marketing efforts
30	Magno & Cassia (2020)	Building relationships	Valuable content with a thought leadership strategy
31	Olson & Thjømøe (2019)	Improving sponsoring brand perception, building emotional connections with customers, and amplifying customer participation	Cross-cultural relevance, alignment with key performance indicators (KPI's), shareable, emotionally resonant, interactive, participatory, real-time, transparent, authentic, and personalized content
32	Zhang & Kim (2022)	Fostering emotional connections, promoting sponsorship transparency, and increasing brand loyalty	Personalized, interactive, emotionally resonant, real-time, transparent, and follow-up content
33	Xie & Lou (2020)	Increasing brand loyalty	Perceived experiential value and unique value of luxury branded content
34	Thompson & Malaviya (2013)	Increasing customer engagement and interaction with the sponsored content	Awareness of co-creation of peer customers, emotional resonance, social proof, product complexity, interactive elements, and feedback loops
35	Keller (2016)	Enhancing brand messaging effectiveness, reinforcing brand identity, creating a synergistic effect, building and maintaining brand awareness and loyalty	Integrated marketing communications (IMC) among various departments, across different external stakeholders including customers, partners, and media, and consistent communication efforts
36	Keller (2020)	Building customer relationships, fostering emotional connections, strengthening brand	Cultural customization for diverse audiences, emotional, real-time, interactive, follow-up

		likeability, and increasing customer engagement with the sponsored content	content, user-generated content, and data-driven personalization
37	Pulizzi (2012)	Attracting and retaining customers	Valuable and engaging content to attract and retain audiences. The importance of creating content, which is informative and entertaining rather than focusing on conventional advertising
38	Jaitly & Gautam (2021)	Improving customer-brand interactions, brand perception and fostering positive word of mouth	Collaborating with social media influencers
39	Lee & Park (2024)	Enhancing the sponsoring brand perception, fostering emotional connections, building relationships and increasing customer engagement	Real-time marketing, multiple-platform content, emotional storytelling, interactive campaigns, cultural and local relevance, content reflecting sustainability and ethical sponsorship practices
40	Wang & McCarthy (2021)	Improving customer brand response	Content contextually suitable for a targeted country
41	Ahmed (2019)	Increasing brand trust and brand loyalty, and fostering customer engagement.	Helpful, engaging and personal content
42	Carter & Eastman (2020)	Fostering emotional connections, enhancing customer participation and increasing brand affinity	Cultural alignment, interactive and participatory campaigns, emotional storytelling, real-time, localized, user-generated content, post-event content, and technology-driven personalization
43	Barry & Gironda (2019)	Affecting purchase intention	Content following a thought leadership strategy
44	Holliman & Rowley (2014)	Fostering customer engagement, attracting customers, building long-term relationships, and building trust and brand credibility, and encouraging customer interaction.	Relevant, valuable, tailored and informative content. Also, shifting from traditional marketing to inbound marketing attracting active customers
45	Mohammad (2020)	Increasing brand trust	Product transparency promoting content
46	Chatterjee et al. (2024)	Amplifying customer participation, building emotional connections, increasing sponsorship visibility, and enhancing brand perception	Real-time personalized, and culturally relevant content, immersive and interactive experiences, user-generated content, storytelling, post-event content and sustainability messaging
47	Repovienė & Pažėraitė (2019)	Adding customer value creation	Posts using photos and hashtags

48	Sabate et al. (2014)	Enhancing customer engagement	Using images increases likes and comments, and videos increases the number of likes and the posts' structure
49	Müller & Möller (2021)	Building customer relationships, improving brand perception, fostering emotional connections, and increasing customer engagement	Real-time, personalized, and culturally relevant, incorporating gamified and interactive elements, storytelling, user-generated content, multi-platform strategies, and post-event content
50	Cvijikj & Michahelles (2013)	Increasing customer engagement, fostering brand loyalty and emotional connections.	Post's characteristics including post's type, medium, and posting time
51	Eigenraam et al. (2021)	Enhancing brand visibility, increasing fan interaction, building emotional connections and amplifying fan engagement	Real-time, personalized and targeted, interactive features, and user participation, content across multiple platforms, emotional storytelling, cultural sensitivity and localization, and post-event content
52	Wang et al. (2019)	Fostering customer engagement and affecting purchase intention	Branded content, events in both online and offline settings
53	Varnali (2014)	Fostering a positive perception of the brand, building strong brand relationships, and enhancing customer relationships	Relevant, targeted and personalized SMS advertising messages
54	Sharma & Kwon (2021)	Fostering emotional connections, increasing brand visibility and customer engagement, and boosting brand loyalty	Real-time content, interactive and gamified content, localized content, emotional storytelling, sponsorship-related content, influencer partnerships, measuring and analyzing engagement
55	Bigné & Andreu (2018)	Enhancing sponsorship effectiveness, building emotional and cultural connections with customers, fostering positive brand associations, and increasing customer engagement	Interactive, relevant, personalized and real-time content, emotional storytelling, social media integration, and localized content
56	Malthouse et al. (2013)	Building trust and credibility, driving customer loyalty, and enhancing brand advocacy	Audience-centric content
57	Achen & Zhao (2018)	Enhancing brand awareness and increasing customer engagement and brand loyalty	Interactive and real-time content, emotional storytelling, leveraging social media
58	Lim et al. (2015)	Improving brand recall and perception and increasing customer interaction,	Personalized, targeted, interactive, and real-time content, interactive experiences and gamification, influencer and celebrity collaborations, and cross-platform integration
59	Schmitt (2012)	Increasing customer engagement, loyalty, and brand advocacy, and preventing the invasive effect of content	Content relevance

60	Mastromartino & Naraine (2021)	Fostering emotional connections, enhancing brand trust and increasing customer involvement	Real-time and event-driven content, user-generated content, social media integration, interactive content, cultural sensitivity, localization, and emotional storytelling
61	Lee & Lee (2020)	Increasing high quality traffic to engage with content and fostering higher conversion rates	Content optimized for search engines
62	Gillooly et al. (2017)	Enhancing sponsorship effectiveness, building emotional connections, and increasing customer engagement	Valuable content, social media integration, storytelling, interactive, personalized relevant and user-generated content
63	Filo et al. (2015)	Building emotional connections, enhancing brand visibility and increasing customer engagement	Social media integration, compelling narratives, interactive and real-time content, user-generated content
64	Bleier & Eisenbeiss (2015)	Improving customer attention, creating emotional connection and trust, increasing click-through and conversion rates, and positive brand perception	Personalization, timing, and placement of online advertisements
65	Lemon & Verhoef (2016)	Increasing conversion rates, creating emotional connection and trust, building brand loyalty	Personalization and retargeting of content based on the customers' past interactions
66	Anett et al. (2022)	Increasing the ranks in search engines, visibility, website visits, and purchase intention	Content optimized for search engines