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REVIEW ARTICLE

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL CONTENT MARKETING IN CONSUMER RESPONSE: BASED ON SOCIAL IMPACT THEORY IN IRANIAN AND AFGHANISTAN INSTAGRAM USER

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, despite a fast growing of the role of content marketing and its importance as one of modern marketing tools, there are lack of studies about it. The purpose of this paper is to explore how the power of Digital Content Marketing and Social Impact Theory in food industry lead to e-wom and Consumer Engagement in three provinces (Iran and Afghanistan). Applied method has been used for this research in which the questionnaire has been utilized in order to gather the required data for describing the research variables and interpreting the relations among them. The analysis unit in this research is a company that is expert in content marketing and active in Instagram food industry. The frequency distribution tables and the structural equations model have been used to describe the data. The importance of this research is to recognize that how Digital Content Marketing for Iranian and Afghanistan Instagram users can increase the effectiveness of content marketing elements in food industry businesses. The results indicate that all of hypothesis were accepted, except the eighth one that effect of self-expression on normative social impact was rejected. Discussion and managerial implication concerning content marketing were explained.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Internet, social media, mobile apps, and other digital communications technologies have become the part of daily life for billions of people around the world. According to recent statistics which are collected in January 2020, 4.54 billion people are active internet users, encompassing 59 % of the global population (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021). According to Statista (2020a), social media usage has become an integral element of the lives of many people across the world. In (2019), 2.95 billion people were active social media users through worldwide. That number is projected to rise to 4.5 billion by 2023. According to Satar *et al.*, (2025), Algharabat *et al.* (2018), Kapoor *et al.* (2018), Kaur *et al.* (2018), Lal *et al.* (2020) and Dwivedi *et al.* (2021), Mirvaisi and Kaffashpoor, (2023), digital marketing enables companies to connect with their customers, improve awareness of their brands, influence consumer's attitudes, receive feedback, help to improve current products and services and increase sales. Digital Content Marketing is now an accepted and assumed as a part of everyday life and hence a crucial component of the professional communicator's tool kit. In the past few years, Iran and Afghanistan food industry has seen remarkable changes and has gone through major transformation. Most of the Iran and Afghan customers' shopping cart consists of food. Food industry is a highly competitive and challenging industry and require more than just low prices and innovative product. To compete effectively, food industry must focus on customers' new methods of buying and interactions. Hence there is an urgent need to study the role of Digital Content Marketing in Iran and Afghan food industry. According to Lee *et al.* (2021), the respondents who are between the ages of 18 and 35 browse food content approximately five days a week on Instagram, and 30% of respondents are reluctant to visit a restaurant. If its

Instagram account is weak. This paper provides avastinsight for Digital Content Marketing professionals' views and attitudes towards Afghanistan and Iranian's Instagram food industry users, with a particular focus on its contributions to enable continuous interaction between consumers and companies and facilitate building sustainable relationship. Therefore, it is essential to understand the role of Digital Content Marketing on consumer response by the moderating role of social impact theory. Also this study expands the social impact issues to verify that whether normative and informational social impact have a moderating role between Digital Content Marketing and consumer responds (e-wom and Consumer Engagement). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of Digital Content Marketing via Instagram to stimulate consumer response in food industries. This study explores the relationship between Digital Content Marketing and social impact theory, and in turn, elucidate the relationships between social impact and consumer responds in food industry. Marketing professionals and academics can use the new model developed in this research to make decisions about food products.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Food industry: The industry of food product has simultaneously increased with the growing popularity of the leisure lifestyle among Iranian and Afghanistan people. Food products range from fast food to other types of food in the Iranian and Afghanistan food industry. Food is one of the most popular themes for social media users. Several food-related has htags such as #food, #insta food, #food porn, and #yummy ranked among the world's top 100 has htags in 2022 (Lee *et al.*, 2021). Nowadays, if you are not aware of this fact, you

drop behind the transformative influence of those social media platforms. Instagram food marketing is probably the best marketing tool in these days, especially when you run a business in the food industry. In recent years, market researchers have discovered that the food industry gathers information through technological communication channels. As a result, they are paying more attention to e-wom in the food industry (Bu *et al.*, 2021).

2.2. Mobile communication technology: Some contemporary researchers have identified a drastically change in consumer behaviour through the evolution of mobile technology. This kind of changes have affected the natural interactions between consumer and the buying process, especially for impulse buying. Moreover, food products buying making decisions is increasingly being done via digital marketing. Thus, Digital Content Marketing by Instagram is likely to be important in this context. Since the mobile Internet began to replace fixed Internet access, the tools and methods of information searching by consumers are also mostly done through mobile device. Now, the number of mobile users has exceeded the number of desktop users. Some scholars have found that consumers use three connected devices at least several times per day from three different locations, and most of these devices are mobiles. These are mainly used for social media, video, games, or search for information (Litvin *et al.*, 2018; Asthana and Pandey, 2020).

2.3. Digital Content Marketing: Since this term was coined around 2001 (Wang *et al.*, 2019), Digital Content Marketing has been deployed across a range of sectors, including consumer durable packaged goods and services (Natasha and Syafna, 2021). Today's consumers are becoming increasingly skeptical of advertising and other traditional marketing communications, thereby paving the way for Digital Content Marketing development. Within broader content marketing, Digital Content Marketing represents those activities executed through digital (online) platforms, including the company website, virtual communities, blogs, vlogs, social media, mobile apps, and so on (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019). Companies using content marketing as their marketing tool, creating, distributing and sharing relevant, compelling and timely content to engage customers at the appropriate point in their buying consideration process, such that encourage them to convert to a business building outcomes (Muller and Christandi, 2019).

2.4. e-wom: E-wom is the most important topic in e-marketing, and generally in consumer behaviour. E-wom is defined as all communications between consumers through internet-based technology where people spread their ideas and opinions through the internet (Alghizzawi, 2019). As it is clear from the definition, e-Wom is transferring and sharing information between consumers without the control of a particular party on their conversations. Customers reduce the risk by evaluating the goods and services used on many sites so that there is a consensus between the search for information electronically before the consumption of the service or goods. Most of researchers in different studies confirm that wom plays an increasingly important role in consumer attitudes. E-wom has become a fundamental topic for marketers and business managers because of the growth of online social media platform for communication such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. With the emerging of more digitalized and networked product or services, online ads and online wom have gradually become two most important marketing communication tools representing the three abovementioned media (Mirvaisi *et al.*, 2019).

2.5. Consumer Engagement: Despite the importance of consumer engagement in social media, its theoretical meaning and dimensionality remains unclear to this date. Consumer engagement has become central in understanding how people interact with and behave in response to dynamic communications (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). Generally, engagement is defined as being "involved, occupied, and interested in something" (Higgins, 2006). As O'Brien and Toms (2008) noted, "successful technologies are not just usable; they

engage users" (p. 938) and thus engagement is critical to the success of technology-mediated communications like social media. Given the benefits of customer engagement, marketers are making greater efforts to differentiate their marketing from others. One strategy is that how to boost consumers' engagement in the community. Without customer engagement, Digital Content Marketing is merely an ordinary medium.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Digital Content Marketing and Social Impact Theory (SIT): Some scholars have used SIT to understand how others influence consumers' emotions, attitudes and behaviours (Cheung *et al.*, 2015). SIT has two dimensions: Normative Social Impact (NSI) and Informational Social Impact (ISI) (Bearden *et al.*, 1989). NSI refers to acting in accordance with the expectations of the group and using social pressure to influence people's behaviours, disregarding their own preferences to avoid social exclusion; ISI means that social pressure can be internalized from acceptance of others' opinions and behaviours (Bu *et al.*, 2020). These two dimensions can affect Digital Content Marketing simultaneously or unilaterally. Some research has observed that some social media users follow group opinion, viewing group opinions as an accepted norm, while some people form their opinions or make their decisions based on information gathered from social media. Therefore, this study assumes that attitudes towards mobile social media content come from four factors include content information (CI), content entertainment (CE), social interaction (SI), and self-expression (SE). In turn, these motivations and attitudes could potentially generate social impacts. Some scholars have argued that social media is a channel for transmitting targeted impacts to group members and stimulates interaction among group members through CI (Fischer and Reuber, 2011). Previous research have confirmed that end consumers of food industry in Instagram are accustomed to collecting information about destinations through social media to guide their decision-making (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). The first hypothesis is as follows:

H1. CI is positively impact on NSI in food industry

When people need to augment their knowledge to find information that is beyond the scope of their reference group, they need to find the source of that information from outside the reference group. Some scholars have pointed out that when people cannot get enough CI from their reference group, their demand for CI will increase, and they will be involved in creating informational impact (Chung and Han, 2017). Also, consumers tend to choose the CI that meets their specific needs, rather than passively absorbing information. This process increases consumer demand for an increase in CI quantity (Hur *et al.*, 2017). When they search for more information to assist their decision-making, this CI will exert informational impacts. Therefore, the second hypothesis is as follows:

H2. CI is positively impact on ISI in food industry

Some studies have conducted exploratory content marketing studies and have analyzed the CE characteristics in various social media. Moreover, some researchers have found that entertainment information creates and disseminates content through endorsement or peer imitation of the content, such that consumers participate in group behaviours (Xu *et al.*, 2017). Initially, research on the relationship between entertainment and ISI focused on online advertising. Later, some research established that consumers on food industry who find reliable and complete information from social media are more likely to seek information and entertainment on them in future. Some scholars have emphasized that CE can lead to an increase in entertainment motivation among users in food industry; this entertainment motivation has a positive association with ISI for information sharing (Hur *et al.*, 2017; Lou and Xie, 2020). The following hypothesis can therefore be made:

H3: CE is positively impact on NSI in food industry

H4: CE is positively impact on ISI in food industry.

Knowledge transfer needs to occur through SI. Some studies have proposed that the virtual community is an appropriate space to transfer knowledge, and people's opinions and knowledge in virtual communities can be easily aggregated and accessed, with the result that the adoption of knowledge is efficient and effective (Bu *et al.*, 2020). Notably, Digital Content Marketing can help consumers to gain a better understanding of products or services (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019). According to SIT, NSI and ISI can estimate intention to adopt knowledge. Moreover, the adoption of knowledge is through SI within virtual communities. Consequently, considering SI as a factor, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: SI is positively impact on NSI in food industry.

H6: SI is positively impact on ISI in food industry.

People are increasingly expressing themselves through social media, resulting in a higher value being placed on SE than ever before (Orehek and Human, 2016). The purpose of SE among individuals who are susceptible to social norms is to seek commonality with other members of the social group. Compared with other traditional media, SE is among the unique and distinctive features of social media, which is a powerful motivation for participating in online activities (Lee and Ma, 2012). SE refers to the extent to which individuals try to control others' impressions of them. Most social media platforms encourage users to show their personality through personal images, information, graphic design and other content to positively influence how others perceive them. Also, some scholars contend that the main motivations for users to participate in social media is that users can express themselves to the outside world through the provision of specific information (Choi *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H7: SE is positively impact on NSI in food industry.

H8: SE is positively impact on ISI in food industry.

3.2. SIT on Consumer Response: According to Pillai *et al.*, (2021), consumer behaviour is directly influenced from traditional marketing and the traditional marketing is counterpart of digital marketing perspectives. Due to the perceived credibility of users on social media, their choices can influence other members' opinions and decisions. Some members even follow the choices and reviews of most people in a social media group or rely on the opinions and reviews of influencers rather than using their own judgment. Some scholars have confirmed that information disseminated through social media is credible and useful within a specific group, leading members to have a positive attitude towards e-wom (Kwahk and Kim, 2017). Through ISI, there is a phenomenon termed 'social contagion' in marketing research, which affects awareness of a product or service. In social media, customers who are affected by ISI obtain information and guidance from their knowledgeable contacts when analyzing their purchasing options, which will lead them to engage in e-wom (Tanford and Montgomery, 2015). Hence, ISI can enhance consumers' trust and increase the spread of e-wom. Therefore, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H9: NSI is positively impact on e-wom in food industry.

H10: NSI is positively impact on consumer engagement in food industry.

ISI can play a moderating role in customers' perception and behaviour in online social interactions. Moreover, the individual's perception of others' social groups shapes their perception of others' susceptibility to being influenced by media content. Additionally, social impact plays an important moderating role in peer-to-peer communication via media (Chia, 2010). Thus, social impact is an intermediate bridge to connect media and customers, and social impact can connect media and peer communication influences together in the field of marketing research. However, such approaches usually rely on consumer engagement and on whether consumers find

the advertisement content inherently valuable (Sanchez and Martinez, 2020). Hence, advertisement have begun to consider how to create advertisements that foster engagement or contribute to consumer value, an approach in, e.g. content marketing (Nystrom and Mikelsson, 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H11: ISI is positively impact on e-wom in food industry.

H12: ISI is positively impact on consumer engagement in food industry.

H13: e-wom is positively impact on consumer engagement in food industry.

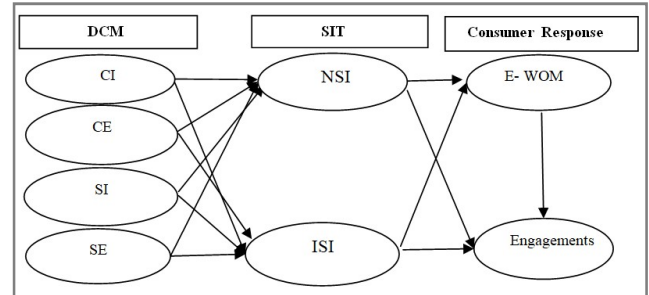


Figure 1. The proposed conceptual model

Digital Content Marketing (DCM), content information (CI), content entertainment (CE), social interaction (SI), and self-expression (SE)

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Data Collection and Sample: The data collection was done through questionnaire distribution among the end users of Instagram who search about various food factories in that medium by using Digital Content Marketing elements (normative social impact and informational social impact). Some of the biggest food factory that operating in Iran and Afghanistan's food industry are Sirang (sirang factory), Razavi (nanerazavi), and Vitana (vitana_co). The participants were randomly selected from various Iranian consumers who have more experience of searching food products in Instagram. The reason for random sampling technique that it was difficult to select the data from only a one specified sector. Thus, the design of study is cross sectional. Total 285 questionnaires were distributed. Out of 285, only 280 usable questionnaires were received.

4.2. Location (Statistical population) and time of research: The statistical population of this study were consumers who follow food industry via Instagram and live in Iran and Afghanistan and its sample consists of 285 consumers who were using Instagram for services of food industry during last week. The initial studies and the period of conducting this research has been in a time span of 5 months by the end of September 2021.

4.3. Methods and instruments applied for data gathering: Researchers contacted people who use Instagram app for searching about and ordering food in Iran and Afghanistan. As a result of this contact, various group of people agreed to participate in the study. A total of 285 questionnaires were prepared and distributed to those people who live in these provinces based on the demographic information of participants. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of the data. By the cut-off date for inclusion, a total of 285 usable responses were collected. The structure of questionnaire consists of three parts: the first part refer to first demographic characteristics, second part is related to the questions for measuring the variables (Digital Content Marketing, social impact transfer and consumer response) and at end we placed an open question for gathering Instagram users' suggestions about the research (Park and Ha, 2021; Putra and Evanita, 2021). Fifty-two percent (n=148) of the respondents were female and 36 percent of them (n=102) were married. The participants' age ranged from 20-54 with a mean of 32 years old. On average, the participants had 3 years of experiences of buying product / service from Instagram.

4.4. Variable measurement & data analysis: As will be detailed in this section, the constructs examined in this study were mainly operationalized using scales found in extant literature. The survey mechanism was first prepared in English and then translated in Persian using a back-translation procedure. The Persian version of the survey was pilot tested on 35 Instagram users for food industry in Mashhad, Birjand and Bojnourd and then consultant by managers of food industry of Iran and Afghanistan. According to the results of this pilot study, the 35 number of Instagram users did not have any difficulty for understanding the survey items. Hence, the instrument was deemed ready for the main study. All the variables are measured by five-point scales Likert, ranging from 1="strongly disagree" to 5="strongly agree" in the questionnaire. SEM was employed to examine the hypothesized relationships in the proposed model.

on NSI in food industry. In the model, this prediction received full support ($t = 4.47; p < 0.001$); therefore, H3 is supported. H4 posited that CE has a positive influence on ISI. Our findings indicate that CE has a significant positive influence on ISI ($t = 3.81; p < 0.01$); thus, H4 is supported. Our model then hypothesized a positive causal path between SI and NSI (H5); this path was supported by our data ($t = 3.00; p < 0.01$); H5 is, therefore, supported. Next, this research predicted that SI has a positive influence on ISI (H6). This hypothesis did not receive statistically significant support; consequently, it can be concluded that H6 is not supported. Results showed that SE has positive impact on NSI ($t = 20/24, p < 0.01$). Therefore, H7 was supported. As predicted in H8, SE has positive impact on ISI ($t = 0/25, p < 0.01$), H9, NSI has positive impact on e-wom ($t = 0/14, p < 0.01$); H9 is therefore, supported. H10, NSI has positive impact on

Table I: Mean, Standard deviations, Correlations among Constructs & Cronbach alpha

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Cronbach
CI	5.40	1.01	1.00								0.95
CE	5.56	1.04	0.32**	1.00							0.95
SI	4.63	1.53	0.14**	0.35**	1.00						0.92
SE	5.96	0.93	0.37**	0.14**	0.42**	1.00					0.89
NSI	4.85	1.21	0.30**	0.41**	0.37**	0.21**	1.00				0.89
ISU	5.33	1.07	0.49**	0.35**	0.55**	0.43**	0.44**	1.00			0.88
e-wom	2.87	1.64	-0.21	0.02	-0.19**	-0.31**	0.02	-0.06	1.00		0.92
Engagement	4.30	1.46	-0.19	-0.14	-0.24**	-0.11**	-0.13	-0.15*	0.25**	1.00	0.88

*indicates that the correlation coefficients are significant at $p > 0.05$ **indicate that the correlation coefficients are significant at $p > 0.01$

5. RESULTS

The statistical strength is especially critical in SEM analysis. In contrast to the traditional hypothesis testing, the goal of SEM analysis is to produce a non-significant result. The reason is that the researcher is attempting to develop a theoretical model that accounts for all the covariance among the measured items. Therefore, a non-significant difference between the implied covariance derived from the parameter estimates for the model and those of the sample data is argued to be suggestive of support for the model. Yet, a non-significant difference may also be due to a lack of ability to detect model misspecification. Ideally, for example, if one failed to include a path between two constructs, the analysis should detect this and reject the null by yielding a poor outcome for the proposed model relative to the data. The measurement model was first examined to validate the research constructs. To assess the overall fit of the model, chi-squared statistic (χ^2), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the non-normed fit index (NNFI), and comparative fit index (CFI) were employed (Heidarzadeh and Mirvahi, 2013). Generally, RMSEA value at or below 0.08, demonstrates good fit. NNFI and CFI values of at least 0.90 indicate an acceptable level of good fit. The measurement model of this study demonstrated overall a high degree of good fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 273.66$, $df = 136$, $RMSEA = 0.077$, $NNFI = 0.94$, and $CFI = 0.95$.

All measurement scales showed statistically significant loading on their corresponding constructs at the alpha level of 0.001. Discriminate and convergent validity were also considered to be ensured since the average variance extracted (AVE) of all constructs were greater than the squared correlation between constructs and exceeded minimum criterion of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As a next step, the proposed model and causal relationships of variables were examined through a structural model analysis. The proposed model of this study indicated overall a high degree of good fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 248.47$, $df = 176$, $RMSEA = 0.056$, $NNFI = 0.98$, and $CFI = 0.98$. And, hypothesis-testing results are summarized in Table II. H1 predicted that CI would positively impact on NSI on food industry. In the model, this prediction received full support ($t = 3.60; p < 0.001$); thus, H1 is supported. Next, H2 predicted that CI had a positive influence on ISI on food industry. As seen in Table II, this prediction also received statistical support ($t = 5.67; p < 0.001$); hence, H2 is supported. Similarly, H3 posited that CE has a positive effect

consumer engagement ($t = 7/19, p < 0.01$); as a result it was supported. H11, ISI has positive impact on e-wom ($t = 3/26, p < 0.01$); therefore it was supported.

H12, ISI has a positive effect on consumer engagement ($t = 4/08, p < 0.10$), therefore, it is supported. H13, Finally, the most important hypothesis is impact of e-wom on consumer engagement in food industry ($t = 3/00; p < 0.01$); H13 is, therefore, supported.

Table 2. Results of quantitative study

Hypothesis	Relationship of construct	Result	T - value
H1	CI → NSI	Supported	3/60
H2	CI → ISI	Supported	5/67
H3	CE → NSI	Supported	4/47
H4	CE → ISI	Supported	3/81
H5	SI → NSI	Supported	3/00
H6	SI → ISI	Not supported	-0/78
H7	SE → NSI	Supported	20/24
H8	SE → ISI	Supported	3/40
H9	NSI → e-wom	Supported	3/48
H10	NSI → engagement	Supported	7/19
H11	ISI → e-wom	Supported	3/26
H12	ISI → engagement	Supported	4/08
H13	e-wom → engagement	Supported	3/00
$\chi^2_{273/90}$			
DF		98	
CFI		0/85	
NFI		0/94	
NNFI		0/91	
RMSEA		0/84	

Note: Significant at $p < 0.05$

6. DISCUSSION

The goal of this study is to understand the influence of Digital Content Marketing (CI, CE, SI and SE) on consumer response (e-wom and Consumer Engagement) by social impact theory (NSI and ISI) and contribute to the existent literature on the subject with new findings or a further confirmation of established ideas. In addition, this study found that these dimensions had significant impact on consumer engagement and e-wom is the most important factor in Iranian and Afghan digital marketing and the main element of content marketing. The result of this study consistent with related literature and are supported by them, which repeatedly found disclosed content by perceived less favorably (see for instance Choudhary and Singh, (2017), Bu *et al.*, (2020), Muller and Christandl, 2019). Furthermore, Digital Content Marketing elements are seen to be more capable of providing detailed and relevant information for consumer of food industry via Instagram, which makes them the most important type of

sources for supporting their decision making in buying services. Company's websites and Instagram page are the most preferred and the most frequently referred tools, in which consumer of food industry even associating certain personality about the company and its product and these associations depend on how the CI, CE, SI and SE are placed on these digital channels. In doing this, our results reflect a current reality concerning impact of Digital Content Marketing on social impact theory. According to Tiago and Verissimo (2014), companies embrace Digital Content Marketing presence mainly because of external competitive pressure and internal efficiency, with the objective to build their selling and marketing, improve knowledge and improve communication flows with consumer in food industry. Regarding social media, not surprisingly, Instagram was established to be more credible than Facebook and LinkedIn because of its trustworthiness and expertise, as it is a platform which is specifically structured for that purpose and it is more professional and informative. As a result of hypothesis, this study shows that Digital Content Marketing makes the company more attractive as products enables it to differentiate itself from competitors, which has a positive influence on the decision to apply for preferring and buying food industry in Instagram. Moreover, Digital Content Marketing also allows consumers to gather more information to support their decision and engagements. Research shows that the greater the level of engagement, the greater the perception of credibility and the greater likelihood of e-wom in the food industry. Lee *et al.*, (2021) defined significant relationships between food content quality – relevance and information usefulness in Instagram. Nevertheless, the relevance of food-digital content marketing had a relatively stronger effect than another factors, which is consistent with the findings of Cheung *et al.*, (2008). This result means that whether content element meets an individual needs and situation, is a key factor to assess usability. The significant influence of the conciseness of Digital Content Marketing in food industry was also relevant and is in line with previous research by fang *et al.*, (2016). e-wom through digital marketing surveillance influences the behavior of Instagram food user and their use of social media and mobile applications. The results in this article are part of this new wave of research and provide sufficient data to keep the attention on the role that Digital Content Marketing plays in consumer behavior from the perspective of Instagram platform. Finally, the more useful the food-content is, the more likely it is to be adopted. Furthermore, as the adoption of information through Instagram increases, the continuous use of food-content marketing in Instagram and the intention to share information also increase. The results of this study support findings from Sussman and Siegal (2003), Ifinedo (2018), Sun *et al.* (2020), and Imlawi (2017). In the future, the amount of information on normative social impact will grow significantly and how useful and helpful that information is will be crucial to engage and consumer users. If users obtain benefits and value from a specific ISI by receiving useful information, then they will continue using that ISI as a channel to search for information and actively participate in e-wom activities. Overall, the current study help to provide a link between different types of content in Digital Content Marketing. Through a serial meditation model, our results do not only show how content type in digital marketing effects on e-wom and consumer engagement but also through underlying mechanisms that they are perceived differently. In this study, for the first time, we examine the relationship between social impact theory and consumer response among food industry users on the Instagram platform.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Theoretical implications: The finding of this research provide several theoretical implications. This study Larget the role of Digital Content Marketing elements to NSI and ISI to increase the impact of user Instagram on food industry in recent years. Instagram has made photo taking and its online sharing as a daily activity for consumers (Tseng *et al.*, 2018). Taking and posting a selfie is generally considered to fulfil a person's desire to interact with others (Lee *et al.*, 2015). By posting photos of themselves, often with products they

like, on social media and attracting hundreds of likes, shares or comments, ordinary consumers use selfie as an opportunity for status and glamour, to be like a celebrity. As such, when a person takes a product selfie and talks about the product online, the post intentionally or unintentionally, becomes a personal product endorsement (Barger *et al.*, 2016). This action can be likened to direct marketing of the product, as the selfie reaches hundreds of people within the person's social groups quickly. Other people might post and read comments, write reviews and further share the post with their friends (Akar and Topcu, 2011). Social communication trends, psychology and behaviour of the posters (Kim *et al.*, 2016). However, few studies have associated selfies with promotion or assessed whether the selfie, like celebrity endorsement, draws favorable customers' attention and interest. Hence there is a lack of concrete evidence that articulates the effect of selfie promotion (taking photo of oneself with products) on decision-making processes. Despite the abundance of literature on celebrity endorsement (Lee and Shin, 2017), the effect of selfies on consumer behaviour remains unknown. The combination of reliable access to high-speed internet, smartphones and social media have given customers a platform to express themselves, attract viewers, and communicate with others across the world. While many business organisations still spend thousands and millions of dollars on traditional media advertisements and pay celebrities to promote their products and brands, the profound effect of selfie promotion via social media and digital devices needs to be considered. This study recognized the importance social impact theory on consumer response which includes two elements of e-wom and consumer engagement in food industry.

7.2. Managerial implications: The focus of this study lay on this question 'which elements of Digital Content Marketing is the best for SIT and both of them on consumer response? Also this study presents possible answer that has the high relevance for the Digital Content Marketing on Instagram. Many companies in Iran and Afghanistan that work in national and international food industry, have been interested in Instagram for establishing a premium e-wom and consumer engagement. We found that content element in Instagram is one of the major variables influencing e-wom and consumer engagement in food industry. Therefore, food companies should use the best content in their Instagram marketing in order to facilitate the search for food services by consumers and their interaction with the company. Strategically, in term of accuracy of food industry in Instagram, the visual information presented on Instagram must be similar to the actual image of products and excessive of image. Finally, encouraging users to adopt and share content is important to increase the effect of marketing and selling. Therefore, this study proposes that firms should offer various benefits to users who share their food experience through Instagram (e.g. coupon, discount, etc.).

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Naturally, this study has limitations which need to be acknowledged. First, the analysis of mainly food industry in Instagram that could decrease the possibility of generalization and external validity. Additionally, the sample needs to be larger, to collect more insights about the subject (e.g. all province or some countries of Middle East by the same culture). Second, in the content analysis, some topics were left out for the sake of the answers for the hypotheses, and therefore it would be interesting to follow up on certain topics which emerged, but were too dissimilar to be included (e.g. perceptions about video content). This would provide a more in-depth understanding of sub-topics which emerged during the interviews, and would thus result in a more inclusive study. Further studies might also investigate the role of expertise and/or knowledge of Instagram use on viewer responses to Instagram images to establish whether and under which conditions they impact digital visual engagement. The positive relationship of Instagram use with both digital visual engagement and intention to purchase opens new venues for

investigation. Future studies may also wish compare light vs heavy Instagram users and their responses to image-based features. Finally, replicating the study with new and untested features would allow us to expand our knowledge on viewer's responses to visual content as well as to contribute to visual semiotic literature. Future research should also try to apply the findings of this study to other forms of media, as some differences could possibly be expected. Blogs come to mind as most obvious form of media that are often used in the context of Digital Content Marketing and should be compared to other apps.

9. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of Digital Content Marketing on consumers' decision to buy from food companies operating on Instagram. The results show that end user of food company consider that information from owned media tools is more credible and relevant for their decision, and they look for content marketing which are more trustworthy and specialized, such as LinkedIn or the company's website. Additionally, Digital Content Marketing seems to have a positive impact on the decision to apply for a competitive advantage, as it provides applicants with more insights about the company, its culture and the industry itself. Finally, reputation still represents a major part of the decision process, which is a challenge for companies in this information-driven age by content marketing and social digital impact. The adaption to the digital era and the new consumer's mindset and emotion is still a challenge for most companies; however, those who are willing to dare and take risks will be the first ones who succeed. Companies should definitely adopt a consumer engagement and e-wom as a means to effectively communicate to the target audience and promote communications and corporate image through content marketing and storytelling. In sum, companies should strive to convince their end consumers in food industry that they are the best brand and factory. Furthermore, due to the rapid development of technology, it is also vital for companies to pay more attention to emerging trends, such as mobile marketing technologies.

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