



# Consumption of Digital Content – Positive and Negative Aspects of Impact on Consumers

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**Abstract:** *The digital environment provides innovative ways to attract potential customers in the market by sharing content through different channels. Content marketing shared daily by companies, paid advertisers, influencers, bloggers, or anonymous individuals in the digital environment shapes consumer habits and directs consumer activities. Therefore, ubiquitous effective digital content marketing and tempting offers can drastically influence consumer behavior and cause positive and/or negative aspects to impact them. The paper presents the theoretical framework as well as the results of the conducted research, which aims to examine how often consumers encounter content marketing, how often they agree to buy under its influence, and determine whether there are positive and/or negative aspects of digital content consumption. The results indicate that consumers encounter content marketing daily, mostly on social networks or digital platforms managed by companies or influencers, bloggers, and others. Consumers receive discounts or promotional offers and codes at different time intervals and they use them while buying. However, the negative aspect of the influence of digital content marketing on the consumer is more pronounced than the positive one.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, content marketing in the digital environment has evolved dramatically to increase the reach and awareness of the product and/or service (Matin et al., 2022; Mendoza-Moreno & Turriate-Guzmán, 2022). By observing customers in the digital environment and analyzing the collected data, companies strive to know every detail of the customer's life to fully customize the offer and provide a memorable customer experience (Saura et al., 2020). Companies use various strategies to present and distribute content in the digital environment. Marketing experts, influencers, or ordinary users with their own experience create different content that finds its way to potential customers. Content that is engaging, interactive, educational and entertaining prompts customers to buy products or services and constantly creates new needs for them, which can be discussed in the positive and negative context of the impact on customers.

The literature certainly tends to emphasize the positive aspects of the influence of digital content on consumers and their purchasing decisions. Through content in a digital environment, consumers are provided with benefits such as discounts, campaigns, prize games, sharing experiences and recommendations, and more (Gümüş, n.d.). In addition, digital content enables access to a wide range of products and/or services from any part of the world, availability of detailed information about products and/or services, insight into reviews, comparison of different brands and more (Ahmad & Rosli, 2023; Hamdan et al., 2021). Although negative aspects are neglected in scientific circles, they do exist and can be described by certain reactions of

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customers and their behavior as a result of contact with certain digital content. The negative aspect of digital content in consumer behavior can be manifested in increased consumption and impulsive shopping (Hrustek, 2023).

The main goals of the research paper are:

- examine how often consumers encounter content marketing,
- examine how often they agree to buy under its influence,
- determine whether there are positive and/or negative aspects of digital marketing.

The next chapter presents the theoretical foundations of qualitative research, explaining the forms of distribution of content marketing in the digital environment and their influence on consumer behavior. The third chapter provides an insight into the methodology of the research conducted and collected data. The fourth chapter presents the results of the research, highlighting the positive and negative aspects of the influence of content marketing on consumer behavior. Finally, the research is concluded with a discussion, and the limitations of the research as well as future research plans are outlined.

## 2. CONTENT MARKETING IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Content marketing includes textual and/or graphic information whose purpose is to present products or services in an entertaining, informative, educational and attractive way to attract, retain and bring back customers (Ansari et al., 2019; Munsch, 2021; Vinerean, 2017). The development of digital technologies has enabled the creation, sharing and distribution of content via platforms or social media, opening paths to potential consumers of all ages, preferences and interests. As consumers spend more and more time in the digital environment in their daily lives, they engage with a variety of products and services (Matin et al., 2022; Mendoza-Moreno & Turriate-Guzmán, 2022). Such enticing offers can have both positive and negative effects on consumers and their behavior.

The types of content marketing distribution in the digital environment are:

- Content marketing and offers distributed on official social networks or platforms by the company;
- Content marketing and offers distributed on search engines, portals, radio and television in the engagement company;
- Content marketing and offers distributed on social networks or platforms of influencers, bloggers or other influential persons;
- Content marketing and offers distributed on social networks, platforms or portals based on experience, reviews, and content created by consumers;
- Content marketing and offers distributed by e-mail, mobile messages or directly to consumers through platforms (e.g. Viber...) (Dobrinčić, 2023; Hrustek, 2023; Saura et al., 2020).

Content marketing on the company's social networks and platforms implies the official distribution of content by the company. This includes various forms of content such as video material, audio content, storytelling, images and more (Chanpaneri & Prachi, 2021; Vinerean, 2017). Through this form of content sharing, companies not only collect feedback from their customers but also observe their behavior in the digital environment to identify key touchpoints that determine their lifestyle habits and interests. The content and offers distributed via portals, radio

and television are also created on behalf of the company and represent a paid form of content distribution. As a rule, this type of content is aimed at a wider audience and the company wants to increase its brand awareness. The distribution of content marketing and offers via social networks or platforms by influencers, bloggers or influential people is a form of content distribution that has characterized recent years. Content shared on Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook and other platforms is a very enticing and widespread form of information sharing that influences people. Recently, consumers have questioned the authenticity and sincerity of content shared by influencers and other influential people (Figueiredo et al., 2021). In contrast, content shared by unpaid individuals is becoming more desirable, and customers are basing their purchasing decisions on recommendations from unknown individuals. Content distributed via e-mail, mobile messaging, or directly via communication platforms is a common way of sharing information about products and services, although it is not as attractive to customers. They are often used to inform customers about discounts, discount codes, special offers, benefits, competitions and more.

### 2.1. Consumer Behaviour Influenced by Content Marketing

The presence of digital technologies has significantly changed people's behavior by creating new lifestyle habits and needs. People spend a large part of their time in the digital environment and use various types of digital solutions. A large part of this time is spent by individuals researching various content related to the promotion and offering of products and/or services. Such content is very interesting and attractive, it draws users' attention and encourages them to immerse themselves as deeply as possible in the world of a particular brand (Chanpaneri & Prachi, 2021; Gregurec & Hrustek, 2022). In addition, the attractiveness of the digital environment is convenient for customers for several reasons. Quick and easy access to all information about products and services, user-friendly and customized shopping options and benefits are just some of the reasons why customers are increasingly taking advantage of the opportunity to shop in a digital environment. Digital technologies have enabled customers to get a more realistic picture of products and services.

Consumer behavior is an interesting research area of particular importance, especially in the online environment, where there are interesting discussions about how and why consumers choose to purchase products or services (Prasetya & Susilo, 2022; Solomon & Lowrey, 2017). Consumer behavior is not constant, it changes over time and depends on numerous factors. Since consumers are different individuals, it is difficult to generalize their habits as their behavior can be influenced by factors such as personal, psychological, social, cultural, lifestyle, geographical and other factors (Hopper, 2020). Customer behavior in the digital environment can be described by certain new habits and activities. Consumers are not only spending more time online and searching for a product or service but are also emotionally connected to a brand. In addition to analyzing consumer behavior through the activities of purchasing, using and disposing of products and services, it also includes the emotional, mental and behavioral responses of the consumer that precede, determine, or follow these activities (Hrustek, 2023).

### 2.2. Positive and Negative Aspects of Consumption Digital Context

Marketing in the digital environment has strengthened the relationship between the brand (the company) and the customer and enabled innovative ways of communicating, collaborating and sharing information. The role of content in the impact on customers is related to visibility and

awareness of content, customer satisfaction, the return of loyal customers and the acquisition of new customers (Jami Pour & Karimi, 2023).

Customers are no longer co-creators of products or services but become an extended hand in enriching and promoting the brand (Geng et al., 2020). Content generated by users and companies receives more attention than content that is available in the physical environment (Müller & Christandl, 2019).

The positive aspects include access to social knowledge and experiences that help customers better understand the purpose of online shopping and make more informed and accurate purchasing decisions. Interaction takes place between consumers, but also between consumers and companies (Geng et al., 2020). Interactions facilitate the creation of product reviews, and as products become more popular, customers create their own content and objective product reviews (Hrustek, 2023).

However, there are also some negative aspects of the impact of content marketing on customer behavior. The main ones are impulse buying, increased consumption and uncontrolled consumption (Hrustek, 2023). With the advancement of technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data and analytics, additional concerns arise. In particular, concerns about unethical content design in digital environments and the compulsion for content marketing strategies to be developed solely for economic and profitability reasons leave many questions unanswered (Barbosa et al., 2023). The privacy of customer data is a sensitive issue and there is debate about how customers can be protected (Anand & Lee, 2023).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter provided an insight into the theoretical implications of the field of content marketing and its influence on consumer behavior as well as its positive and negative aspects, based on qualitative research of secondary literature sources.

The quantitative research conducted to collect and analyze the primary data is described below. A questionnaire was created that included three groups of questions:

- Demographic characteristics of respondents (4 questions);
- The impact of content marketing on consumers (4 questions);
- Positive and negative aspects of content marketing on consumer behavior (2 questions).

The questionnaire was distributed via social networks LinkedIn and Facebook avalanche method and the sample was purposive.

A total of 54 people took part in the survey, answering all questions in full (Table 1). According to demographic characteristics, 85.2 % of the participants were female, the remaining 14.8 % were male. Most respondents (64.8%) were between 25 and 34 years old, and not a single respondent between the ages of 15 and over 55 took part in the survey.

The respondents were largely a population with a completed specialist professional or university graduate studies/ integrated undergraduate and graduate university studies, (50% of respondents), 22.2% of respondents had completed professional or university undergraduate studies, and 18.5% of respondents had completed four-year high school. The vast majority of respondents, 74.1%,

were in permanent employment, while 9.3% of respondents were in fixed-term employment, as were the students. Two unemployed people and one housewife took part in the survey, while one person stated that they were in part-time employment. The results of the research, according to the demographic characteristics of the observed control variables are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Female	46	85,2%
	Male	8	14,8%
<b>Age</b>	> 15	0	0%
	15 – 24	8	14,8%
	25 – 34	35	64,8%
	35 – 44	10	18,5%
	45 – 54	1	1,9%
	55 – 64	0	0%
	< 65	0	0%
<b>Education</b>	Unfinished Elementary School	0	0%
	Finished Elementary School	0	0%
	Finished Two- or Three-Year High School	1	1,9%
	Completed Four-Year High School	10	18,5%
	Completed vocationally or university undergraduate study	12	22,2%
	Completed specialist vocationally or university graduate study/ integrated undergraduate and graduate university study	27	50%
	Completed postgraduate specialist study	1	1,9%
	Completed postgraduate scientific master's study	1	1,9%
<b>Employment Status</b>	Completed university postgraduate doctoral study	2	3,7%
	Primary and high school student	0	0%
	College student	5	9,3%
	Part-time job	5	9,3%
	Full-time job	40	74,1%
	Housewife	1	1,9%
	Unemployed	2	3,7%
	Retired	0	0%
Other: honorarium job	1	1,9%	

Source: Own research

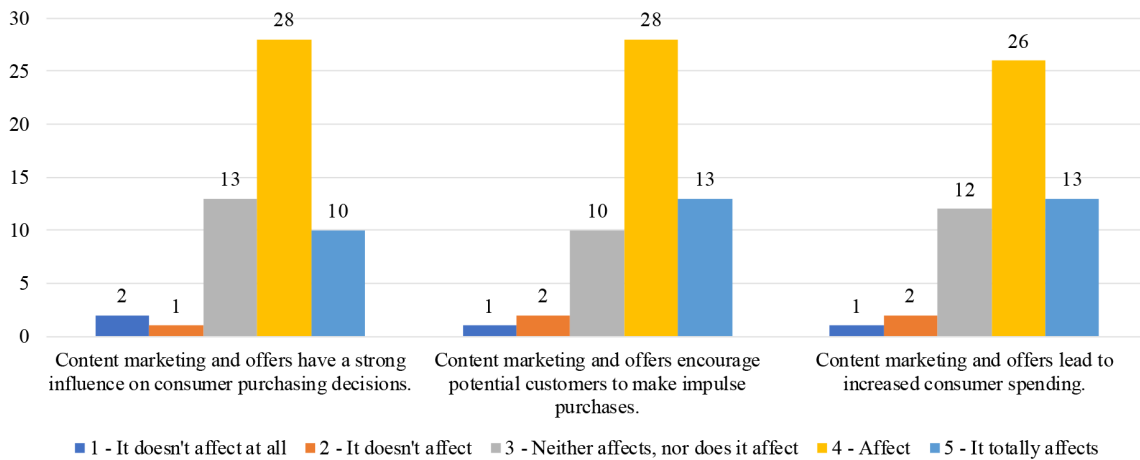
#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The analysis of secondary sources found that content marketing and offers have an influence on customers' purchasing decisions, which was confirmed by the analysis of the data collected from respondents with an average grade of 3.8 (Figure 1). A large number of respondents agreed that content marketing and offers encourage impulse purchases, with an average grade of 3.93. Respondents also confirmed that content marketing and offers increase spending, with an average grade of 3.89.

Figure 2 shows the influence of the different types of content marketing in the digital environment on consumers (respondents). Content marketing that is distributed via e-mail, mobile messages or directly via platforms such as Viber and others has the lowest impact. Content marketing that is distributed via portals, radio or television also has a lower impact.

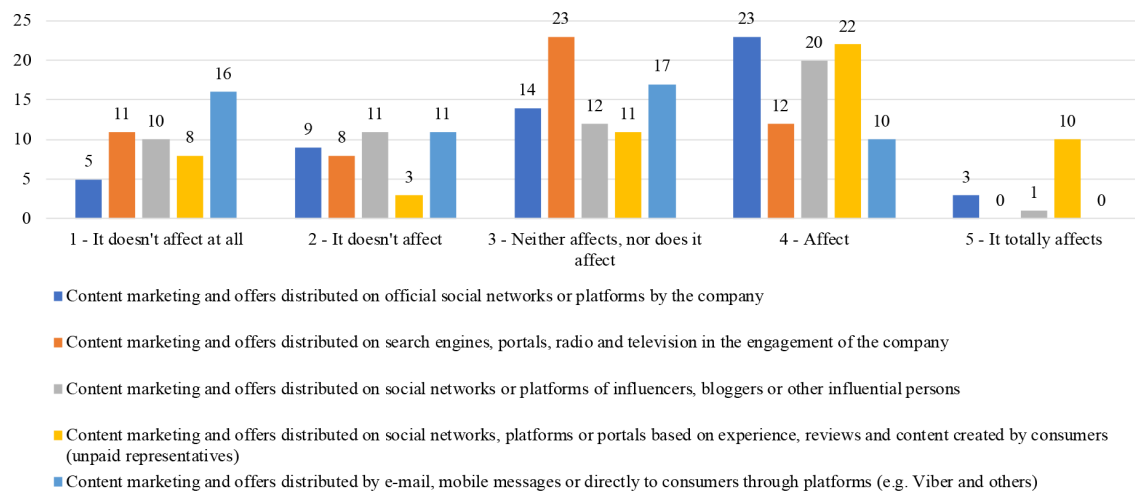
The content marketing that has the greatest impact on respondents is that created by customers or unpaid people on social networks or platforms. In addition, half of the respondents confirmed that they are influenced by content marketing available on professional social networks or corporate platforms and influencers are still noticeable with their content.





**Figure 1.** The impact of content marketing

Source: Own research



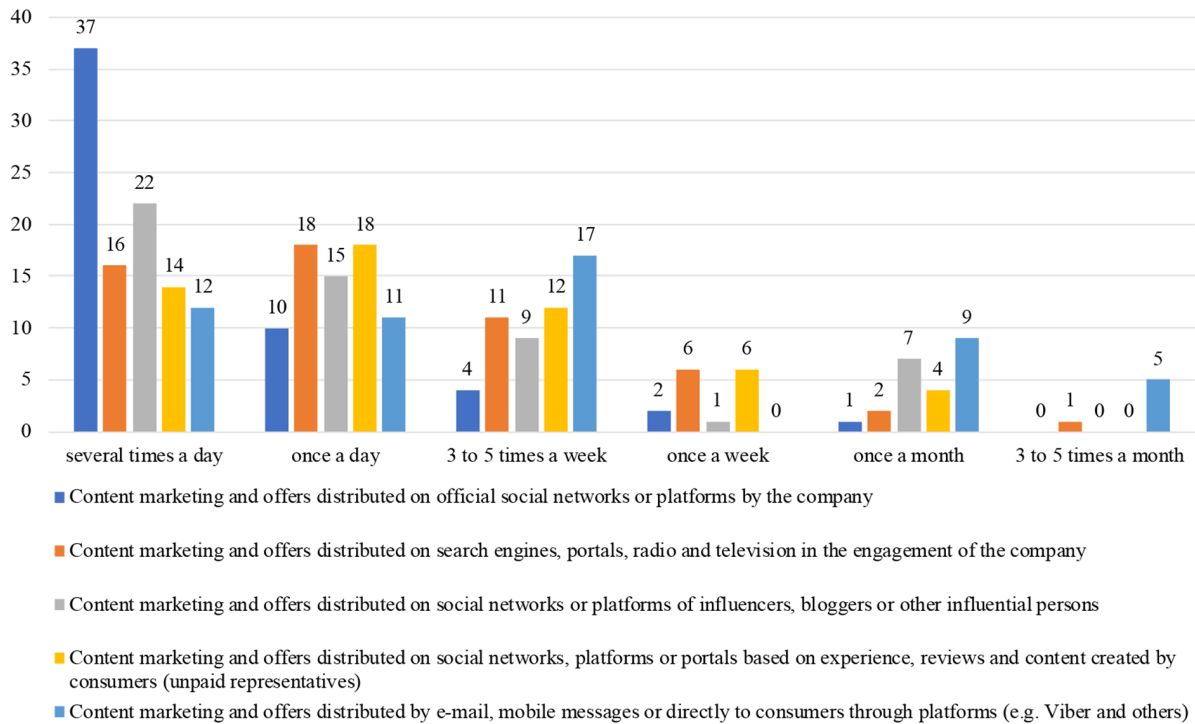
**Figure 2.** The impact of different content marketing on the purchase decision

Source: Own research

Figure 3 shows that a large number of respondents come across content in the digital environment several times a day, especially content that is distributed on the company's platforms and social networks, as well as content from influencers, bloggers and other influential people. Only a small proportion of respondents emphasized that they came across this content in more than a week (less than 10 of them).

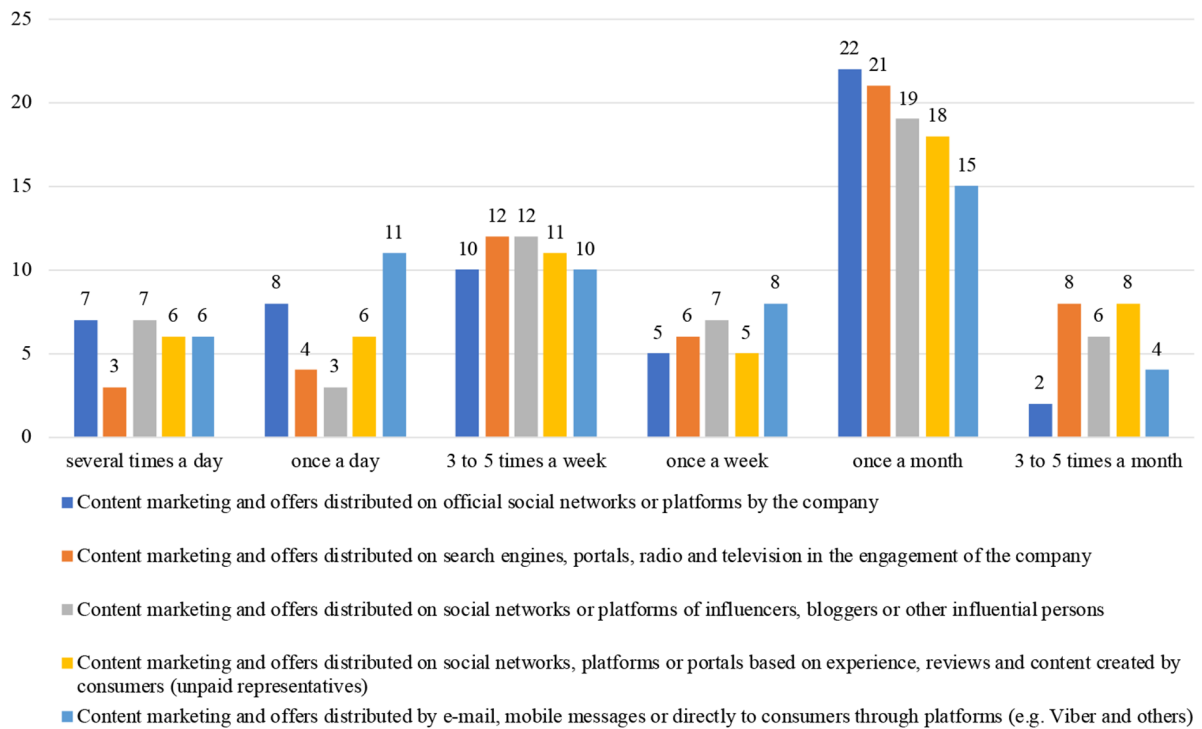
Figure 4 shows the frequency with which respondents receive discounts, promotional codes and other benefits through content marketing. For all forms of content distribution, most often this offers to be once a month. However, some respondents stated that this is the case 3 to 5 times a week. It is interesting to note that a proportion of respondents, 11, receive special offers directly via e-mail, mobile messages, or platforms once a day.

Figure 5 refers to the negative aspects of the effects of content marketing. Respondents had to express their agreement with two statements, the first relating to unnecessary consumption and the second to borrowing. The data analysis revealed that content marketing encourages customers to make unnecessary purchases. The average score was 3.87, and most customers agreed that such content encourages unnecessary purchases. Slightly fewer respondents, with an average score of 3.30, believe that content marketing influences their borrowing of money.



**Figure 3.** The frequency of respondents’ encounters with content marketing

Source: Own research

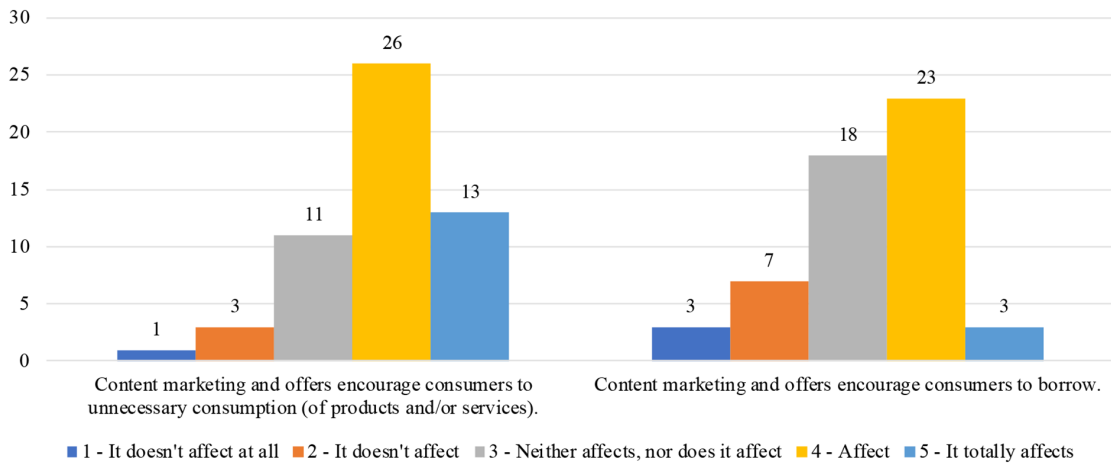


**Figure 4.** Frequency with which respondents receive discounts and promotional coupons/ codes in addition to marketing content and offers

Source: Own research

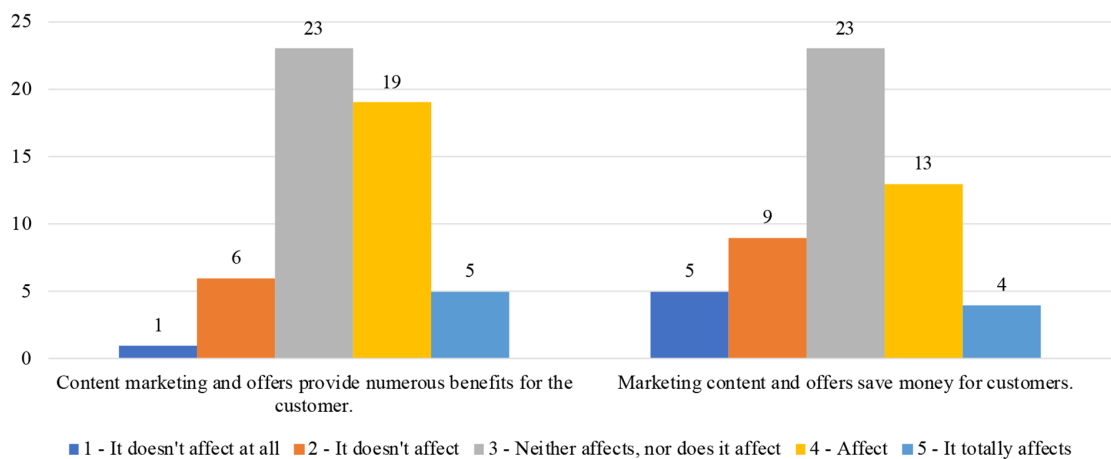
Figure 6 shows the respondents’ agreement with the positive aspects of content marketing. The majority of respondents (23 of them) neither confirmed nor denied their agreement with the numerous benefits of content marketing in connection with discounts and other advantages when

making a purchase. The average score was 3.38. Respondents' opinions on content marketing enabling more favorable offers available to customers, i.e. the opportunity to save money, were divided. With an average score of 3.03, some respondents agreed with this statement, while others felt that the cost savings had not been achieved.



**Figure 5.** Negative context of content marketing

Source: Own research



**Figure 6.** Positive context of content marketing

Source: Own research

## 5. LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The constant development of technologies opens up new initiatives to offer customers products and/or services and improve the customer experience. Content marketing and offers are reaching potential customers more easily than ever via various media and channels. This is done in an attractive, exciting and user-friendly way. Customers are not only co-creators of value but their active role is expanded and they become partners in sales and reaching awareness of the company's brand.

Alongside influencers, bloggers, marketing experts and other marketing influencers, the customer is becoming a creator, sharer and disseminator of content. All generations of people are actively pursuing different content in the digital environment, which is changing their behavior. Research has shown that content marketing and offers in the digital environment influence consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. The effects of content marketing can be divided into positive and negative aspects.



The conducted research provided an insight into the impact of marketing content on consumer behavior, focusing on the positive and negative aspects of the impact of content marketing, however only a small sample of respondents took part in the research and therefore some broader and clearer conclusions were missing.

The marketing content in the digital environment influences consumers in their purchasing decisions, encouraging them to make impulse purchases and increase consumption. The influence on consumer behavior is most evident in the content distributed via social networks and corporate platforms, by customers and then by influencers, bloggers and others. However, it can be seen that customers trust the experiences and reviews of other customers the most. It can be seen that customers follow the content daily, while most receive certain benefits once a month.

Ultimately, however, it can be stated that the respondents are unanimous and confirm the negative aspects of the influence of marketing content (unnecessary purchases and borrowing), while they are divided on the positive aspects, i.e. most of them stated that they didn't achieve benefits and save money. Another limitation relates to the research of positive and negative aspects, where only the two most frequently mentioned aspects from each group were included, while more are mentioned in the literature.

Future research will include analyzing positive and/or negative content marketing by content type (educational/entertaining/informative) and assessing content value according to customer expectations.

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