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THE RELATIONSHIP OF CONTENT AND AFFILIATE MARKETING STRATEGIES WITH VARYING SHOPPING BEHAVIOURS*

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Abstract. This research analyses factors related to customers' variety-seeking shopping behaviour, including marketing analysis and online shopping motives. A key novelty of this study is the conceptualisation of effective marketing as a combined construct of content marketing and affiliate marketing, an approach not yet considered in prior research. This research paper also examines the role of customers' demographics within this relationship. With an experimental research design, a structured questionnaire was administered to a total of 408 participants, and the responses were examined through techniques of SEM, mediation, and moderation. The findings reveal that effective marketing, through affiliated content, stimulates customers' shopping motives and directly influences their variety-seeking behaviour. Moreover, demographic variables of customers moderate influence of effective marketing on variety-seeking behaviour, but not the mediated effect via online shopping motives. Retailers can capture variety-seeking behaviour by strategically delivering affiliated content that aligns customer motives with their market offerings.

Keywords: variety-seeking; shopping motives; marketing; demographics; content marketing; affiliate marketing

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JEL Classifications: M31, D12, D11, C38, L29

1. Introduction

The internet has revolutionised how individuals interact, access information, and engage in commerce, creating a pervasive digital environment that has redefined traditional marketing and consumer behaviour (Kaur et al., 2021; Išoraitė & Alperytė, 2024). In response, organisations are adopting innovative digital marketing strategies, particularly affiliate marketing and content marketing to influence consumer decision-making, foster engagement, and drive sales (Ahmad & Rosli, 2023). The global retail industry is projected to grow steadily, reaching a total retail sales value of approximately 32.8 trillion USD by 2026. From 2020 to 2024, the industry maintained an average growth rate of around 4.6%, indicating vigorous consumer purchasing activity. However, a notable slowdown is expected, with growth rates declining to 3.4% in both 2025 and 2026 (Bilzpalnr Team,

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2025). This declining trend suggests the onset of market saturation and shifting consumer behaviour, highlighting the urgency of adopting innovative marketing strategies. Some organisations are struggling to survive with traditional marketing strategies that are out-of-date and challenging to keep pace with the current trends (Cannistrà et al., 2022; Cannistrà et al., 2024). Therefore, this study has conceptualised that adopting modern approaches such as affiliate marketing and content marketing can influence marketing strategies in the present time.

Content marketing is a method of developing and sharing valuable and appropriate content aimed at attracting, acquiring, and retaining a clearly-defined and understandable target audience, to generate customer profitability while fostering customer-brand relationship and fidelity (Lou & Xie, 2021). On the other hand, online affiliate marketing is a technique where an online retailer collaborates with and compensates third parties to increase their website traffic, ultimately promoting and selling their products and services (Snyder & Kanich, 2016). Additionally, consumers are regularly enticed to try new things or brands by special offers, discounts, or incentives in active marketing techniques, which leads to variety-seeking behaviour due to the perceived value and opportunity to examine other options (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000). Further, central to the success of these online marketing approaches is a deep understanding of customer shopping motives, which are broadly categorised into utilitarian and hedonic motivations, where utilitarian motives emphasise functionality, convenience, and cost-efficiency, while hedonic motives relate to emotional gratification, excitement, and social identity (Childers et al., 2001; Jaseckova, Konvit & Vartiak, 2022).

Nevertheless, the association between marketing and variety-seeking behaviour remains underexplored, limiting businesses' ability to craft strategies that cater to variety-seeking customers while maximising their outcomes. In this regard, the research problem is stated below.

2. Literature Review

Contextualise effective marketing of affiliate marketing and content marketing

In today's information-driven and trust-oriented marketing scenario, influencer marketing, along with customer reviews and brand awareness, shapes the customers' decision-making (Setyawanatra et al., 2025) because issues like spamming, security risks, cookie stuffing, privacy risks, and the lack of affiliate marketing are influencing the customers' attitude (Garg & Singla, 2024). Complementing the above facts, a study found that competency, integrity, organisation-based trust, knowledge-based trust, website reputation, and web interface design are the trust factors that shape the affiliate marketers' strength (Gregori et al., 2014). So, it can be said that the content of affiliate marketing influences the buying decision through brand image (Ibrahim & Suhermin, 2025).

In the marketing context, user-generated content positively influences customers' purchase intention, particularly when it has in-group and community acceptance (Sewwandi & Warnakulasooriya, 2025). The attributes of content, such as relevance, customer engagement, and trust, can significantly impact purchase intention and decision-making (Das et al., 2025; Meriem, 2025). However, the contents of influencers having a commercial flavour may adversely affect the customers' purchase intention (Lim et al., 2025). Thus, it requires conceptualisation and empirical testing to determine whether affiliate marketing and content marketing lead to effective marketing for retail organisations.

Effective marketing influences customers' variety-seeking shopping behaviour

As an essential element of digital marketing strategies, content plays a vital role in organically attracting and retaining customers (Fan & Zhang, 2025). So, content developed and promoted by brands for target customers can create value when it is both consumed and shared. However, creating content that aligns with a brand's core values is crucial for developing and promoting compelling content that drives a favourable impact (Ho, 2020). On the other hand, affiliate marketing is a successful internet marketing technique crucial for today's competitive market, showing significant growth alongside e-business development (Ivkovic, 2010) and is the most effective method of selling advertising space, offering greater flexibility, precise response measurement, enhanced revenue generation, and broader customer reach compared to traditional media. In addition, the tendency of customers to seek variety is an essential determinant of shopping values for buyers (Irani & Hanzae, 2011), where the importance of separating variety switches from derived switches, along with consideration of the

product's category-level aspects, explains the occurrence of variety-seeking shopping behaviour. Moreover, in the green context, affiliate marketing & content marketing drive variety-seeking behaviour, with consumer motives serving as a mediator (Sahu et al., 2025). The above points imply that both content and affiliate marketing collectively influence the variety-seeking behaviour of customers.

H1: Effective marketing is significantly and positively influencing their variety-seeking shopping behaviour.

Effective marketing influences customers' online shopping motives

Content formed and promoted by brands for target customers can create value when it is both consumed and shared. For this, the creation of content needs to align with the core values of brands and value creation to develop and promote compelling content that drives favourable impact (Ho et al., 2020). Furthermore, service features and affiliate marketing, to a certain extent, positively impact the buying interest of electronic commerce consumers (Marquerette & Hamidah, 2023). Specifically, informativeness, perceived trust, usefulness and incentives are significant drivers that influence customers' attitudes toward affiliate marketing. Moreover, people engage in shopping for purposes beyond merely fulfilling their product or service needs. These motivations behind shopping trips can vary and may include factors unrelated to making a purchase, where utilitarian and hedonic motivations substantially affect searching for information online and intentions to shop, which in turn is a significant predictor of intention to shop online (Fülöp et al., 2023). Further, online shopping positively influences consumer loyalty, yet it requires support from content marketing and discounts in price to capture customers' interest. However, customers' pleasure slightly reduces the impact of content marketing on online shopping, although the effect is not statistically significant (Halik & Nugroho, 2022). From the above points, it thus becomes necessary to examine the relationship between marketing and online shopping motives.

H2: Effective marketing is significantly and positively influencing their online shopping motives.

Online shopping motives lead to variety-seeking shopping behaviour

Shopping motivations differ across channels and types of products, with online buyers valuing savings, variety, and delivery, while in-store buyers seek socialising and individualised assistance. Further, online shopping offers convenience and instant gratification; in-store shopping provides nostalgia and loyalty benefits. For hedonic products, shoppers value self-confidence and the in-store experience. At the same time, utilitarian purchases prioritise control across both channels (Haridasan & Fernando, 2018), where both utilitarian and hedonic motivations influence online information-seeking as well as intention of buying, while the information search plays a crucial role in customers' intention of online purchase (Fülöp et al., 2023). Further, the utilitarian motivation of online purchasing is categorised into five dimensions, which are accessibility, information availability, convenience, searchability and product availability (Kumar & Kashyap, 2018). Moreover, the extent of information seeking about the product and deal-proneness acts as a mediating factor, further shaping the relationship between variety-seeking behaviour and shopping orientation (Murray, Jin & Martin, 2022). Thus, it is crucial to comprehend the association between online shopping motives and variety-seeking shopping behaviour.

H3: Online shopping motives are significantly and positively influencing their variety-seeking shopping behaviour.

The interrelationship between effective marketing, online shopping motives, and variety-seeking behaviour

Amid the intense global competition, companies are increasingly implementing e-commerce and online business strategies that leverage social media networks and digital platforms to gain deeper insights into consumer behaviour, strengthen marketing strategies, and share innovative business information (Rosário & Raimundo, 2021). One of these e-commerce strategies is content marketing, which uses internet celebrity endorsement to drive referral traffic to e-commerce websites effectively; however, its impact on sales growth remains limited (Iliescu, & Ioanid, 2024). Another e-commerce strategy, affiliate marketing, has a positive and significant influence on buying intention and consumer behaviour; however, its impact on shopping decisions remains positive yet negligible (Kertiriasih, 2023). Moreover, customers' desired values play a crucial role than their prior experiences in shaping intentions of variety seeking, with their satisfaction and anticipated utilitarian or hedonic values influencing these intentions differently across high and low allocentric personality groups

(Ha & Jang, 2013). Thus, the tendency to seek variety is a critical factor in shopping values for shoppers. However, there is an adverse association between hedonic value and price sensitivity, whereas there is no evidence of a favourable relationship between utilitarian value and price sensitivity (Irani & Hanzae, 2011).

H4: There is a significant indirect positive effect of ‘effective marketing’ on ‘variety seeking shopping behaviour’ through the mediation of the online shopping motive of customers.

The role of customers’ demographics in effective marketing, online shopping motives, and the variety-seeking shopping behaviour framework

Customers’ attitude towards the promotional strategies of the mall retailers is influenced by price sensitivity, shopping value, and proneness towards deals and coupons, where customers’ demographic variables, such as age, income, and education, impact their attitude towards promotions. In addition to this, the variations in demographic factors shapes perceptions of customers regarding affiliate-marketing strategies; these strategies are associated with their decision-making processes in online shopping, which in turn are closely linked to their digital shopping behavior (Išoraitė, 2024) where gender, age, and income are significantly associated with risk factor, product (or brand) knowledge, feed-backs, and product value of affiliate marketers (Xu et al., 2025). Moreover, customers’ explorative behaviour, type of the product, past purchasing patterns, gender and breadth of available choices significantly predict customers’ variety-seeking behaviour (Jankalová & Vartiak, 2017; Ni et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the scarcity of information substantially increases the extent of variety-seeking, as customers’ expertise levels are shaped by acquiring information through learning and experience, thereby moderating this link. However, novice customers are more prone to seek variety than expert customers when information availability is limited. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine the role of customers’ demographics within this intricate relationship among effective marketing, online shopping motives and variety-seeking shopping behaviour.

H5: Customers’ demographic variables are significantly interacting with the effective marketing, shopping motives and variety seeking shopping behaviour.

3. Theoretical grounding for major hypotheses

Assael’s (1987) framework of classification of buying behaviours suffers multi-dimensional shortcomings to explain all the types of buying behaviours of customers in the modern content driven competitive markets, particularly in the recent social complexity. It does not fully capture the nuances of the complex buying behaviour, dissonance reducing buying behaviour, habitual buying behaviour, and variety-seeking buying behaviour. This framework mostly driven by the consumer-actions and does not capture market stimuli (affiliated contents) that may ease or deviate buying behaviour of consumers. Also, it does not consider the psychological drive (motive) that variate the consumer’s involvement in purchase decision. Our study addresses these lacunas by modifying the Assael’s framework of classification of buying behaviour, supported by empirical evidences. The Assael’s framework is based on two dimensions that are difference between brands and buyer involvement. In our study, we intend to classify the buyer involvement on two dimension that are affiliated contents (marketing effectiveness as second order construct in this study) and shopping motives, as both dimensions are highly relevant in modern customers’ life style.

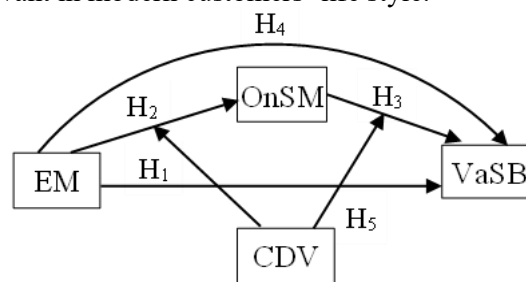


Figure 1. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Source: own processing

This study's theoretical framework (Figure 1) reflects five major hypotheses and four constructs, such as Effective marketing (EM), online shopping motive (OnSM), variety seeking shopping behaviour (VaSB), and customers' demographic variables (CDV).

4. Study's Design and Methodology

Problem Statement

Does the variety-seeking shopping behaviour derive from underlying shopping motives, within the realms of affiliate marketing and content marketing?

Objectives:

1. To identify and define the significant dimensions of affiliate marketing and content marketing.
2. To analyse the relationship among affiliate marketing, content marketing, and shopping motives with variety-seeking shopping behaviour.
3. To explore the role of customers' demographics within the relationship of affiliate marketing, content marketing, shopping motives and variety-seeking shopping behaviour.
4. To develop marketing strategies that cater to variety-seeking customers while maximising the businesses' outcomes.

This research paper employs an experimental research design in which causal associations between effective marketing (affiliate-marketing and content-marketing), "online shopping motives" and "variety-seeking shopping behaviour" are investigated. A systematically developed questionnaire employing a five-point Likert measurement scale is administered to 408 participants. This questionnaire contains 41 items, from which 10 items are related to effective marketing; 18 items are related to the online shopping motives; 8 items are related to variety-seeking shopping behaviour, and five items are related to customers' demographics. This study implemented a stratified sampling method, with four geographical areas treated as four strata. The analysis of data starts with scale reliability testing. Then the analysis is carried out using structural equation modelling (SEM), where two measurement models that are online shopping motives with four constructs and effective marketing with two constructs are tested using confirmatory factor analysis before testing the structural model to make sure that the constructs can be measured by the indicators derived from the literature review. Thus, the second-order CFA is applied. After which, the moderating effect of customers' demographics is tested within the above-mentioned structural relationship. Hence, the present study intended to test Hayes' model-59. The data analysis is performed using software such as IBM SPSS 27.0, AMOS 24.0, Process-Macro, and Mendeley Desktop for referencing and citations.

5. Analysis, Results and Discussion

Study's Scale-Reliability

The reliability of this study's scale, as measured by internal consistency, is nearly 84% (Cronbach's Alpha value with standardised items is 0.844), comprising 41 items that include five demographic variables. So, the structured questionnaire carries 'desirable' reliability along with having a mean value of 167.15 and corresponding standard deviation value of 18.554.

Sample profile of the study

The sample consists of nearly 67% males and 33% females. The sample's age distribution shows that the majority, around 46%, are young customers (up to the age of 30), while middle-aged customers (up to the age of 50) comprise 50%. The older generation (above 50 years) makes up only 4%. The marital status shows that around 49% are unmarried, while the married individuals constitute 49%, and only 2% are divorced. Among the sample, participants having an education qualification of intermediate level are only 11%, undergraduate level 17%, post-graduate level 39%, and nearly 33% of respondents carry a qualification higher than post-graduate level, where the sample's income level reveals that the low-income category (up to 30,000 INR) accounts for nearly 51%, the mid-income category (up to 60,000 INR) for 31%, and the high-income category (above 70,000 INR) for 18%.

Measurement model of online shopping motives (OnSM)

This measurement model is tested through CFA that has four constructs: VS (Variety-seeking); IUPS (Information use in planning and shopping); PSC (Physical store characteristics), and OC (Overall Convenience), carrying five, four, four, and five indicators, respectively.

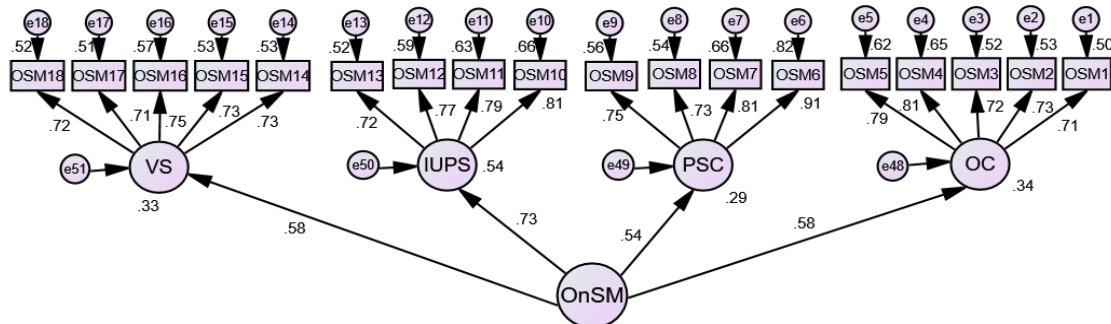


Figure 2. Measurement model of online shopping motives

Source: own processing

Model-fitting of OnSM is acceptable with its statistical inferences that fit-indices are crossing (or fall below) the recommended values, where values (.966, .960, and .966) of IFI, TLI and CFI are higher than .95 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2013); values of GFI, NFI and RFI are more than .9 (Hu & Bentler, 1998); value (1.950) of CMIN/DF is below 3 (Schreiber et al., 2006); value (.042) of RMR is lesser than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999); and the value of RMSEA (.048) is below .06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Measurement model of Effective marketing (EM)

CFA tests this measurement model with two constructs, which include effective Affiliate marketing (AME) and Content marketing (CME), carrying five and five indicators, respectively.

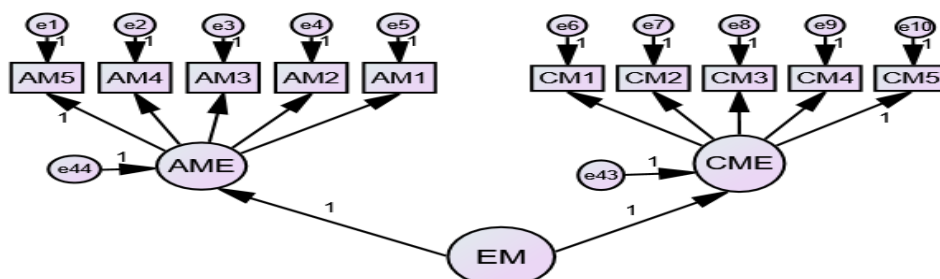


Figure 3. Measurement model of Effective marketing

Source: own processing

Statistical inferences say that model-fitting of EM is acceptable as fit indices are meeting the cut-off criteria, where values (.968, .958, .968, .950, and .958) of IFI, TLI, CFI, NFI and GFI are higher than .95 (Hair et al., 2013; Hu & Bentler, 1999); Values (.934) of RFI is higher than .9 (Hu & Bentler, 1998); value (2.700) of CMIN/DF is below 3 (Schreiber et al., 2006); value (.044) of RMR is lesser than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999); and the value (.064) of RMSEA is between .06 and .08 (Schreiber et al., 2006).

Reliability and convergent validity of both measurement models (OnSM and EM)

Every construct (VS, IUPS, PSC and OC; AME and CME) of both measurement models is tested for convergent validity & reliability according to the recommendations of Straub et al. (2004), and Table 1 illustrates the results.

Table 1. Convergent Validity and Reliability of constructs of both OnSM and EM

Online Shopping Motives (OnSM)								
Indicators with respective constructs	B	‘t’	α and CR	Indicators with respective constructs	B	‘t’	α and CR	
OC				IUPS				
OSM1	.704	14.354*	.865 and .865	OSM10	.808	14.653*	.856 and .856	
OSM2	.726	14.972*		OSM11	.794	15.175*		
OSM3	.720	14.874*		OSM12	.771	14.149*		
OSM4	.806	17.090*		OSM13	.719	---		
OSM5	.791	---						
PSC				VS				
OSM6	.908	17.907*	.876 and .879	OSM14	.727	13.508*	.850 and .850	
OSM7	.814	16.728*		OSM15	.730	13.587*		
OSM8	.733	14.990*		OSM16	.750	13.937*		
OSM9	.750	---		OSM17	.712	13.390*		
				OSM18	.727	---		
Effective marketing (EM)								
AME				CME				
AM1	.703	13.050*	.848 and .848	CM1	.758	13.980*	.854 and .854	
AM2	.724	13.411*		CM2	.704	13.077*		
AM3	.758	13.969*		CM3	.728	13.493*		
AM4	.738	13.652*		CM4	.773	14.223*		
AM5	.714	---		CM5	.709	---		
OnSM (2 nd order construct)			.740	EM (2nd order construct)				
OC	.581	6.561*						
PSC	.543	5.753*						
IUPS	.733	6.181*			AME	.829	---	.841
VS	.577	---			CME	.781	---	
‘t’ is the value of the critical ratio (CR); β – Standardised regression weight; α – Cronbach’s Alpha; OC: Overall Convenience; PSC: Physical Store Characteristics; IUPS: Information use in Planning and Shopping; VS: variety-Seeking; AME: Affiliate Marketing; CME: Content Marketing; *Significant at 1% level of significance; --- regression weight is pre-fixed as 1								

't' is the value of the critical ratio (CR); β – Standardised regression weight; α – Cronbach's Alpha; OC: Overall Convenience; PSC: Physical Store Characteristics; IUPS: Information use in Planning and Shopping; VS: variety-Seeking; AME: Affiliate Marketing; CME: Content Marketing; *Significant at 1% level of significance; --- regression weight is pre-fixed as 1

Source: Authors' compilation from analyses

Values of Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability (CR) for each construct exceed .7, as suggested by Hair et al. (2013), indicating acceptable reliability for both measurement models. Simultaneously, convergent validity is also permissible for these two measurement models having additional statistical results of lowest factor-loadings (.728, .734, .709, .711, .707, .730) of the constructs (VS, IUPS, PSC and OC; AME and CME) of OnSM and EM, respectively, that crosses 0.7 (Henseler et al., 2009); and all AVE values that cross 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), by meeting the cut-off values. A significant 't' for every indicator at 1% level of significance proves the correctness of the model composition (Table 1). The values (0.848 and 0.854) of CR and the value (0.528 and 0.540) of AVE of AME & CME (measurement model of effective marketing) are higher than the prescribed (Hair et al., 2013) value, respectively.

Discriminant validity of both measurement models (OnSM and EM)

All six constructs of both measurement models are tested for discriminant validity, and results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Discriminant validity of constructs of OnSM

Constructs OnSM	Mean	SD	AVE	MSV	ASV	Max R(H)	OC	PSC	IUPS	VS
OC	19.26	4.235	.563	.168	.137	.870	.751			
PSC	15.02	3.322	.647	.197	.116	.901	.296	.804		
IUPS	15.40	3.163	.599	.197	.174	.860	.393	.444	.774	
VS	18.92	3.984	.532	.170	.134	.851	.410	.253	.412	.729
Discriminant validity of constructs of EM										
AME	18.05	4.315	Values (0.726 and 0.734) of the square root of AVE are greater than the value (0.648) of inter-construct co-relationship.							
CME	17.89	4.351								

SD: Standard Deviation, AVE: Average Variance Extracted; MSV: Maximum Shared Variance; ASV: Average Shared Variance; OC: Overall Convenience; PSC: Physical Store Characteristics; IUPS: Information Use in Planning and Shopping; VS: Variety-Seeking. *Inter-construct co-relationship is significant at 1% level of significance.

Source: Authors' compilation from analyses

Discriminant validity of every construct is justified as the square root of AVE (diagonal values in bold) for every construct (Table 2) of online shopping motives carries a higher value than the respective inter-construct co-relationships; and values of MSV and ASV are less than respective values of AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Additionally, the values of Max R(H) and the maximal reliability of all constructs are more than 0.8 (Hancock and Mueller, 2001). The desired statistical nature of all constructs is reflected in their mean and standard deviation (SD). For the construct of Effective marketing (EM), the values (0.726 and 0.734) of the square root of AVE are greater than the value (0.648) of inter-construct co-relationship, which justifies successfully passing the discriminant validity criteria (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Structural model analysis

Along with the two-step recommendation (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), the structural model (Figure 3) is tested by the SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) technique after testing two measurement models. The structural model carries 18 indicators of OnSM, 10 indicators of EM, and eight indicators of VaSB.

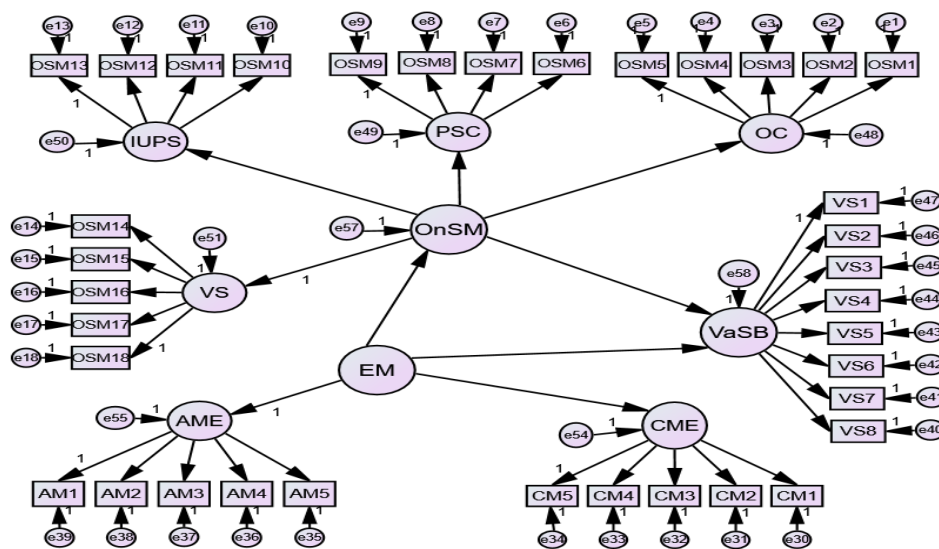


Figure 4. Structural model of variety-seeking shopping behaviour on effective marketing and online shopping motives

Source: own processing

Structural model is adequately fitting to the data and concept as major fit-indices are successfully meeting the cut-off criteria, where values (.903, .958, .955, .958) of GFI, IFI, TLI and CFI are more than .9 (Hu & Bentler, 1998); value (1.442) of CMIN/DF is below 3 (Schreiber et al., 2006); value (.058) of RMR is below .08 and value (.032) of RMSEA is below .06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Thus, three major hypotheses (H1, H2 and H3) are tested through the above structural model, and the results are explained in Table 3. Standardised regression weights shown in the model (Figure 4) justify their effects as being significant for the hypotheses.

Table 3. Results of testing of the structural model and major hypotheses

Major hypotheses in the structural model	B	S.E.	't'	Hypothesis testing results
Effective marketing is significantly and positively influencing their variety-seeking shopping behaviour. (H1: VaSB ← EM)	.271	.082	3.124**	Supported
Effective marketing is significantly and positively influencing their online shopping motives. (H2: OnSM ← EM)	.234	.048	2.941**	Supported
Online shopping motives are significantly and positively influencing their variety-seeking shopping behaviour. (H3: VaSB ← OnSM)	.219	.115	3.024**	Supported
OnSM: Online Shopping Motives; EM: Effective Marketing; VaSB: Variety-Seeking Shopping Behaviour; β-Standardised Regression Weight; 't' – Critical Ratio; S.E.- Standard Error; **Significant at 5% level of significance.				

Source: Authors' compilation from analyses

Table 3 reflects that three major hypotheses are supported. That means the green perception of customers has significant positive effects (nearly 47% and 93%) on their purchase intention and on their attitude toward sustainable practices. And, attitude toward sustainable practices also carries a significant positive (nearly 52%) effect on their purchase intention. Three hypotheses are logically supporting the 4th hypothesis (H4) that the indirect impact (through the mediating effect of attitude toward sustainable practices) of green perception on purchase intention is significant.

Moderating effects of demographic variables within the structural model

Hypothesis 5 (H5) is tested through moderation analysis, where five demographic variables (gender, marital status, age, educational qualifications and gross income) are treated as moderators within the structural relationship of EM, OnSm, VaSB. It is tested through model-59 of Hayes (2018), and the statistical results, along with inferences, are systematically presented as follows.

Table 4. Significance of the moderating effect of demographic variables

The target variable is VaSB (Variety seeking shopping behaviour); The causal variable is EM (Effective marketing). Mediator is OnSM (Online Shopping motive)	Moderators	Interactions	Coefficient	SE	't'	LLCI	ULCI
	Gender	Int_1	-.2251	.1110	-2.0284**	-.4433	-.0070
		Int_2	.8876	.1702	5.2161*	.5531	1.2221
	Marital Status	Int_1	-.2584	.1104	-2.3404**	-.4754	-.0414
		Int_2	.9440	.1676	5.6307*	.6144	1.2735
	Age	Int_1	-.0544	.0219	-2.4877**	-.0974	-.0114
		Int_2	.2466	.0346	7.1181*	.1785	.3147
	Educational Qualification	Int_1	-.1423	.0587	-2.4238**	-.2577	-.0269
		Int_2	.5351	.0869	6.1614*	.3644	.7058
	Income	Int_1	-.0377	.0177	-2.1250**	-.0726	-.0028
		Int_2	.1992	.0269	7.4154*	.1464	.2520

S.E.: Standard error, LLCI: lower-level confidence interval, ULCI: upper-level confidence interval, level of all confidence intervals is 95.0000, No. of bootstrap samples is 5,000; **significant at 0.005; *significant at 0.001, Int_1: EM x Separate demographic variables, Int_2: OnSM x Separate demographic variables

Source: Authors' compilation from analyses

Table 4 indicates that both Int_1 and Int_2 are significant for all five moderators at the 5% and 1% significance levels, respectively (Hayes, 2018). However, the Int_1 is substantial on the minus side for all moderators. Furthermore, the values of both LLCI and ULCI in all cases are either negative or positive, implying the significance of the moderating effect. The above results justify that all five moderators are significantly moderating the structural relationship of EM, OnSM and VaSB.

Table 5. Demographic variables are moderating effects of EM on VaSB

Conditional direct effects	Moderators	Effect	S.E.	't'	LLCI	ULCI
	Gender (1, 2)	.3871	.0791	4.8937*	.2316	.5426
		.1620	.0779	2.0803**	.0089	.3150
	Marital Status (1, 2)	.4161	.0791	5.2606*	.2606	.5715
		.1576	.0770	2.0462**	.0062	.3091
	Age (2, 4, 6)	.4092	.0692	5.9131*	.2732	.5453
		.3004	.0508	5.9123*	.2005	.4003
		.1916	.0648	2.9552**	.0641	.3190
	Educational Qualification (1, 2, 4)	.3448	.0577	5.9724*	.2313	.4582
		.3448	.0577	5.9724*	.2313	.4582
		.2025	.0636	3.1847**	.0775	.3274
Conditional indirect effects (OnSM is the Mediator)	Income (1, 3, 4)	.3773	.0652	5.7902*	.2492	.5054
		.3019	.0507	5.9541*	.2022	.4016
		.1888	.0691	2.7306**	.0529	.3247
	Gender (1, 2)	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
		.0029	.0098	-.0096	.0314	
		.1402	.0424	.0632	.2272	
	Marital Status (1, 2)	.0024	.0108	-.0129	.0314	
		.1492	.0440	.0685	.2407	

	Age (2, 4, 6)	.0075	.0179	- .0214	.0050
		.0149	.0115	- .0014	.0424
		.1353	.0384	.0648	.2144
	Educational Qualification (1, 2, 4)	.0021	.0072	- .0069	.0227
		.0021	.0072	- .0069	.0227
		.1085	.0311	.0514	.1740
	Income (1, 3, 4)	.0057	.0157	- .0180	.0460
		.0090	.0105	- .0064	.0354
		.1697	.0463	.0837	.2650
VaSB: Variety seeking shopping behaviour; EM: Effective marketing; OnSM: Online shopping motive; S.E.: Standard error, LLCI: lower-level confidence interval, ULCI: upper-level confidence interval; level of confidence for all confidence intervals is 95.0000, No. of bootstrap samples is 5,000; *significant at 0.001; **significant at 0.005					

Source: Authors' compilation from analyses

Table 5 reflects that both the direct effect (with five demographic variables as moderators) and the conditional indirect effect are significant (Hayes, 2018). The conditional direct effects are substantial, along with all positive values for LLCI and ULCI. The conditional indirect effects are substantial, with positive values of BootLLCI and BootULCI at higher levels of moderators. However, this is insignificant at lower levels of respective moderators, as the values of BootLLCI are negative and BootULCI are positive. Hence, it can be concluded that conditional indirect effects are not significantly moderating, but conditional direct effects are significantly moderating.

Although the structural relationship of EM, OnSM and VaSB is significantly moderated by five demographic variables (gender, marital status, age, educational qualifications and gross income), the moderated conditional indirect effect of EM on VaSB through OnSM is not proven. On the other hand, the above-mentioned demographic variables significantly moderate the direct impact of EM on VaSB.

Testing the standard method bias

Harman's (1967) recommendation states that a single component (or factor) should not account for more than 50% of the total variance in the study's data when undergoing unrotated principal component analysis with a pre-fixed single factor. This study indicates that the measuring-technique bias is negligible, as all 36 variables of the structural model account for 19% (Total percentage of factor loading extracted = 19.029) of the variance.

5. Findings

Retail organisations operating in today's digital marketplace can enhance effective marketing through affiliate and content marketing, with affiliate marketing showing a slightly more substantial influence. Online shopping motives, including information use, variety-seeking, convenience, and store characteristics, significantly strengthen customer engagement, with information use being the most essential factor. Effective marketing achieved through affiliated content directly and positively affects customers' variety-seeking shopping behaviour and indirectly through their shopping motives. Moreover, demographic factors—gender, age, income, education, and marital status—moderate this direct relationship but not the mediated one.

Empirical evidence supports the study's modification of Assael's (1987) buying behaviour framework. The revised model introduces two key dimensions—affiliated content (effective marketing) and shopping motives—within customer involvement. As both of the above-mentioned dimensions empirically show a significant influence with similar magnitude on the variety-seeking buying behaviour (Figure 4), 'customer-involvement' dimension (horizontal axis) should carry 4 levels in the modified classification-matrix (Figure 5). Vertical axis for the modified matrix is considered to be same as the Assael's classification. The difference between brands is a reality of marketers, where there is no role of customers. Therefore, we have not considered the vertical axis for modification. However, the dimension of customer involvement in horizontal axis, directly is concerned with customers. Hence, the horizontal axis is modified into four levels, addressing both subjective (shopping motives) and objective (affiliated contents) aspects of buyer's involvement. The modified matrix identifies eight distinct types of buying behaviours, combining levels of involvement and brand differentiation.

Difference between brands → ↑ →	Significant difference in brands	Solution- oriented complex buying behaviour	Enjoyable complex buying behaviour	Variety seeking buying behaviour	Variety referral buying behaviour
	Low difference in brands	Learning-based dissonance reducing buying behaviour	Action-based dissonance reducing	Habit building buying behaviour	Habit driven buying behaviour
		Content oriented high involvement	Motive oriented high involvement	Content oriented low involvement	Motive oriented low involvement
→ Buyer involvement →					

Figure 5. Octagon buying behaviours

Source: Prepared by the authors extending the Assael's classification of buying behaviours

Addressing the drawbacks of Assael's (1987) classification of buying behaviour, it is inferred (figure-5) from the empirical outcomes of this study that high participation and strong motives produce enjoyable, complex buying behaviour, while high involvement with content orientation results in solution-oriented behaviour. Low involvement and motive orientation lead to habit-driven behaviour, whereas low involvement with content orientation forms habit-building behaviour. When brand differences are significant but involvement is low, consumers exhibit either variety-seeking or variety-referral behaviour, depending on their orientation. Under low brand differences and high participation, customers exhibit action-based or learning-based dissonance-reducing behaviour.

Affiliated content can effectively influence shopping motives by showcasing product variety, convenience, and positive store experiences. Retailers should stimulate customers' shopping motives through credible, socially endorsed information and align offerings with variety-seeking tendencies. Marketing functions must strategically use affiliated content to direct these motives and behaviours. Retailers unable to customise for specific demographics should employ indirect approaches via shopping motives, while those with adequate resources should directly target variety-seeking behaviour through enhanced effective marketing.

6. Conclusions

How retail organisations should manage the variety-seeking shopping behaviour of customers remains unanswered to date. But this study intended to answer this mystery convincingly. Thus, this study explores the relationship among effective marketing, online shopping motives, customers' demographics, and variety-seeking shopping behaviour. To date, these intricate relationships have not been empirically validated, making their investigation more essential and timelier, which this paper addresses.

This research work confirms that affiliate marketing and content marketing are pivotal in enhancing the effective marketing of retail organisations. The empirical evidence further reveals that effective marketing has a direct and positive influence on variety-seeking behaviour and online shopping motives, which in turn positively influences variety-seeking shopping behaviour. Further, customer demographics moderate the direct path but do not moderate the indirect path.

Beyond filling a gap in the literature, this research contributes valuable, actionable implications for retailers. The retailers, by leveraging content and affiliate marketing, can stimulate online shopping motives of customers and cater for their variety-seeking tendencies. This, in turn, can help retailers craft appropriate strategies that align with diverse customer segments.

Although this study considers a new dynamic of the modern information market, incorporating more relevant elements beyond affiliate and content marketing could further accommodate the dynamism of the contemporary competitive market. Shopping motives in the online context are studied here, but the customers' motives in both online and in-person contexts can provide in-depth strategic orientations for retail organisations. Although demographic variables are essential moderators, future researchers can address socio-psychological properties such as risk perception, cultural background, and habits.

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