THE IMPACT OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON DIGITAL CONTENT MARKETING PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

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The rapid growth of digitalization of marketing communication methods and marketing processes has led marketers to transform their way of conveying messages to customers and the necessity of digital content has grown. This fundamental shift of reaching the target audience with the right message makes digital content marketing (DCM) a mainstream marketing process. Similarly, the need for efficiency in the DCM process makes generative artificial intelligence (GAI) a strategic solution where content can be generated using a prompt by a conversational method with AI. To address important knowledge gaps, this research identified the factors that may lead marketers to use GAI over humans in content creation. GAI strongly influences the digital content creation by offering efficiency, personalization, and better customer insight that eases the task of marketers, although there are still challenges for marketers regarding the quality of content and accuracy of information where they need to invest manpower.

This study employed a theoretical framework addressing the effect of GAI on the marketing process and outcomes that are grounded in relevant marketing research streams (DCM, GAI, and marketing technology). Following the theory, a qualitative research method was used, building on seven semi-structured interviews with DCM professionals from different industries who have hands-on experience using GAI tools. Using thematic analysis, the patterns of themes are identified, and a thematic framework is developed that represents the influence of GAI in the DCM process.

Results from the research add knowledge regarding the impacts of GAI tools in content marketing. GAI has made it easier for marketers to create value for customers through personalized content addressing their needs and saving marketing expenditures. The findings also indicate that GAI applications have made the content creation faster, improved the idea generation process, and offered a wide variation of design in content that directly influences customer engagement and satisfaction. This study contributes to the knowledge of DCM by reflecting on the benefits, challenges, and prospects of GAI technology considering a contemporary phenomenon in the DCM field. From the managerial perspective, this research provides digital marketing practitioners with a foundational knowledge of GAI's current influence on content marketing and future endeavors considering the migration of content creation skills.

Key words

Digital Content Marketing, Generative Artificial Intelligence, Content Creation, Content Marketing Efficiency, AI based Content Marketing

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1   Introduction

Digital content marketing (DCM) is not only one of the tools under the umbrella of marketing rather it is now a widely used vehicle (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019) for reaching a wider customer audience in terms of engagement, trust (Taiminen & Ranaweera, 2019), lead generation (Wang et al., 2019), and loyalty (Tyrväinen et al., 2023). Consumers and business buyers now put greater emphasis on information search and evaluation stages in their purchase journey (Terho et al., 2022), which is facilitated by a greater volume of content available for any certain product or service. The focus on creative digital content creation and content marketing is growing continuously and its significance as a major marketing tool has increased the demand for digital content among professionals. Hence, it is reshaping the methods of searching for information and interaction among people on the web (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). Digital content marketing has set a bigger picture of inbound marketing through efficient segmentation and targeting of valuable customers for value co-creation (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Moreover, DCM has already established itself as a customer-centric communication approach compared to traditional company-centric promotional communication (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016; Taiminen & Ranaweera, 2019).

The estimated revenue of the global content marketing industry is expected to reach USD 107 billion by 2026 (Statista, 2023). The growth of revenue in the content marketing industry has made the growing need for content creation evident in the global marketing arena. According to MGDA (2014), 70% of the consumers reflected their choice to learn about products or services through content rather than traditional marketing communication. Digital content focuses on the scope of catering to customers by adding value to their lives through creativity, education, and awareness about a brand in contrast to persuading advertising models (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). Thus, the objective of DCM is defined to intensify the brand perception among customers and ultimately cultivate indirect sales through

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engagement, trust, and relationships (Bowden & Mirzaei, 2020; Hollebeek & Macky 2019).

The increased demand for DCM has poised the necessity of technological efficiency to serve a higher volume of content. Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) is a new generational AI technology that helps marketers create new digital content based on user's prompts or queries (De Cremer et al., 2023). According to Susarla et al. (2023), GAI opens the door for creating new digital content based on the prompts of text, images, or other types of media. As a result, content creation has become easier and comes within the reach of a search box. Other scholars (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Kshetri et al, 2024) also emphasized that the emergence of GAI influences enterprise-wide digital content creation, and marketing is the most impacted functional area that benefits from the applications of GAI (Kshetri et al., 2024). Nearly half of all the content marketers are already using GAI for brainstorming, and researching keywords and one-third of them are actively using GAI for creating content (Content Marketing Institute, 2023). So, it is an important phenomenon to understand and explore from the DCM perspective where little research was carried out given that it is a recent emergence. This master thesis has addressed the phenomenon of how GAI influences DCM and where the role of marketers is affected.

1.1   Research Gap in GAI-based Digital Content Marketing

The growing essence of digital marketing as a tool for marketers in creating customer-centric communication and building brand awareness influenced the wider scope of research in the DCM field. Since the marketing field is going through a transformation where traditional marketing is shifting towards digitalization, many studies have been done on the practices (Holliman & Rowley, 2014), processes (Terho et al., 2022), importance, impacts (Fan et al., 2024) and frameworks (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019) in different aspects of digital content marketing. Moreover, the avenue of study in DCM is relatively new, and many of the studies are solely focused on the business-to-business (B2B) marketing perspective while some studies are conducted focusing on customer-centric principles (Terho et al., 2022). Limited understanding of the role of digital technologies has been found in the early studies on digital content marketing, and B2B industrial contexts were mostly highlighted. Holliman & Rowley (2014) stated the importance of applying the theoretical framework in different areas (Paid, Non-paid, and social DCM) to advance the understanding of value in digital content marketing. The study of Terho et al., (2022) presented the necessary activities for customer-centric DCM in the context of the B2B market. However, they have identified DCM key principles and DCM activity dimensions in the study that facilitate customer journey and

engagement, but the role of digital technologies was overlooked. The study led by Wang et al. (2019) is solely focused on the content marketing of large consultancy organizations prioritizing reputation management which does not apply to other service industries including start-ups where DCM is required as a part of the awareness-building process. The study of Zhang & Zhang (2023) also depicted the necessity of investigating how value co-creation among different stakeholders of the organization influences overall revenue growth in social media platforms. Hence, it is evident that the previous digital marketing studies hardly investigated the role of GAI in DCM while a couple of studies (Kshetri et al., 2024; Wahid et al., 2023) have set new research agenda on this subject.

Similarly, some research has been conducted on the GAI as a technology tool; its usage, and its effects on marketing activities (Kshetri et al., 2024; Huh et al., 2023; Kunz & Wirtz, 2024; Paul et al., 2023; Peres et al., 2023; Polonsky & Rotman, 2023), but without considering how GAI may affect the skills and practices of content marketers. For instance, the recent study of Kshetri et al., (2024) discussed the GAI's offerings in creating opportunities for marketers and positively influencing the marketing's bottom line. However, it is important to explore how GAI contributes to the bottom line of the marketing effort of the organization. And one of the factors could be resource efficiency where GAI enables the organizations to reduce dependency on human-generated content. The study of Reisenbichler et al., (2022) has found that GAI can significantly reduce the marketing cost of Amazon AWS by GAI-powered semiautomated SEO content generation. Yet, it is still unclear how wide the application of GAI can go in supporting the overall DCM field by generalizing the AI content creation process as a regular function of digital marketing. Thus, this study aims to understand how GAI influences organizational outcomes by influencing digital marketing practices and marketers' skills.

1.2   Research Questions

This research aims to investigate how GAI is influencing the traditional content creation process and digital content marketing in general. This study will seek the possibility to address the research limitations of different studies mentioned under the research gap aligning to the core subject matter, which is DCM and GAI. Considering the future research avenue recommended by Kshetri et al., (2024), this study will focus on how personalization, insight generation, and content creation are better facilitated by GAI and may lead to improved customer satisfaction and loyalty. This study's objective is to develop a deeper understanding of GAI's role in DCM in contemporary marketing practices.

Another aspect of this study is to investigate the efficiency of GAI as a content creation tool that underpins the managerial problem of the human vs AI-generated

content debate in marketing. Thus, various applications of GAI in the content creation process are studied in this thesis. Considering the dilemma of benefits vs threats of GAI as a managerial problem, this study will explore how GAI can affect the skills of content creators and marketers in reshaping content marketing practices.

The aims of this research address the following research questions-

RQ1: How is GAI influencing digital content marketing?
RQ2: How can GAI affect the role of content creators in marketing functions?
RQ3: What kind of threats does GAI pose to content marketers in the future?

These questions will be answered in this study through theoretical and qualitative research.

1.3   Research Methods

A qualitative interview study was conducted with seven digital marketing professionals from Finland and Bangladesh to answer the research questions. The interview data was compiled using semi-structured interviews. The purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods were used to select the interviewee considering their expertise and experience in the digital marketing field across industries.

The interview data was analyzed to understand and interpret how digital content marketing is evolving with AI tools. Thus, thematic analysis has been applied given that the pattern and themes around the application of GAI have been analyzed to portray the desired findings.

1.4   Study Structure

The thesis starts with a background analysis of the managerial problem regarding the influence of GAI in digital content marketing. In the first chapter, the background study leads the problem identification along with a review of research gaps in this domain that sets the possible research questions for the study. The key concepts that revolve around the subject matter which are digital content marketing, GAI, and its influence on content creation are explored with constructive discussion following a theoretical framework. The theoretical framework proposed by Kshetri et al., (2024) has been used in this study that asses the effect of GAI on marketing processes and outcomes.

After summarizing the theoretical framework and literature review to devise the research's foundation, the study's methodological aspect unfolds. The philosophical view of the research, its approach, and its design have been presented. This study follows the qualitative research method. The data collection plan and methods are reflected here along with protocols. Later, in the fourth chapter, based on the data analysis of primary data, the findings are presented following the research question and theoretical framework. Based on the findings, results have been presented in this phase of the study.

In the final chapter, the conclusion of the thesis is drawn with theoretical contribution, managerial implication, limitations of this research, and way forward for further research agendas. The overview of the research structure is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Structure of the Research

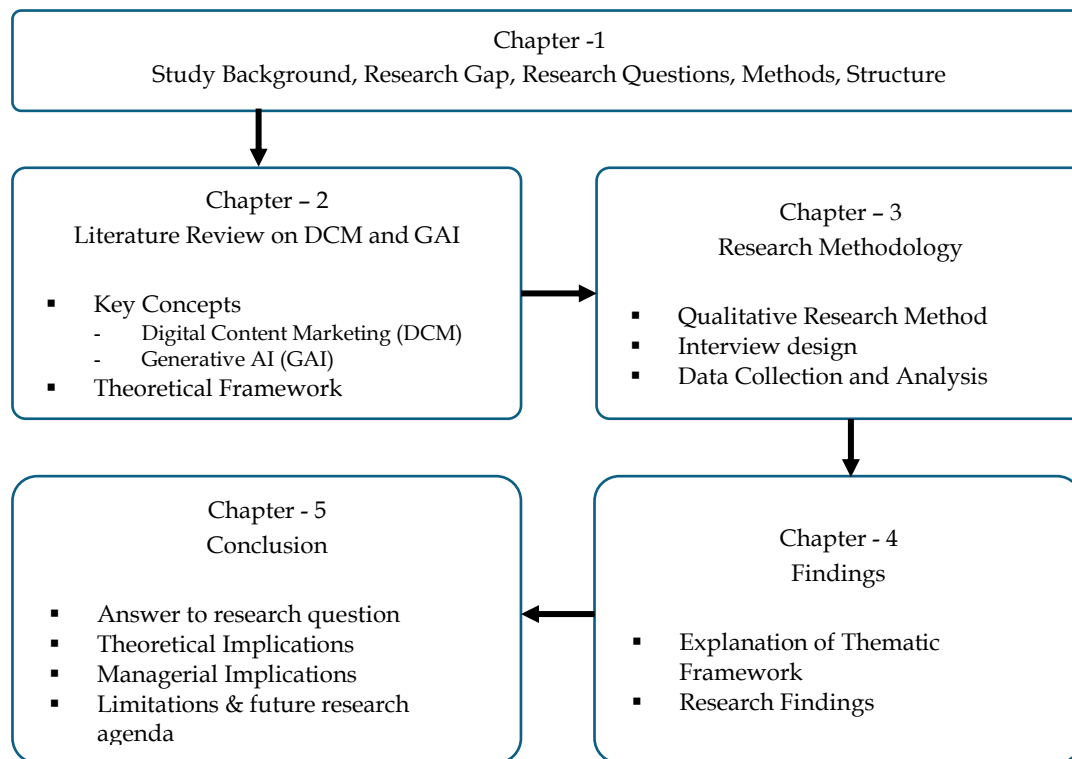The GAI tools have been used in the ideation process of this master's thesis by following the guidelines of the Jyväskylä University School of Business and Economics (JSBE). ChatGPT AI assistance has been used in the idea-generation process in developing a thematic framework for the study. Moreover, Grammarly software has been used as a writing assistant to improve grammar and for proof checking.

2. Literature Review

The research stream in digital content marketing is relatively new and studies on GAI are mostly focused on the technological point of view. Different academic literature and industrial reports on DCM are synthesized here. However, the relevant literature on GAI from a content marketing viewpoint is little, hence the theoretical knowledge for this study has been formed by synthesizing relevant research on GAI focused on marketing in general. In the beginning, the key concepts of the study are reviewed following DCM and GAI literature. Subsequently, the theoretical framework of Kshetri et al., (2024) is evaluated in contrast to other relevant DCM literatures to gather theoretical knowledge on the influence of GAI in DCM. High-quality and contemporary relevant literature is used in this section following the Academic Journal Guide review.

2.1   Key Concepts

2.1.1   Digital Content

Content is defined as the multiple forms of media materials including text, image, video, audio, and animation used in different mediums to drive engagement (Juntunen et al., 2020). Though content can be viewed as publishing material, Holliman & Rowley (2014) set the criteria that content needs to be interesting and relevant enough to grab the target audience's attention. Content in digital platforms works as an alternative to traditional advertising which offers an inbound logic to create pull communication (Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Terho et al., 2022). Juntunen et al., (2020) have viewed content as a social media engagement tool. In contrast,

Wang et al., (2019), addressed that content is a customer engagement and relationship-building tool. On the other hand, Kozinets (2014) elaborated the categorization of content into business-led and consumer-led content where business-led contents are aimed to promote and advertise the products and consumer-led content is mostly collaborative to influence people's behavior for a certain social outcome. According to Zhang & Zhang (2023), contents help firms achieve a favorable positioning by creating valuable consumer experiences.

2.1.2   Digital Content Marketing (DCM)

Content marketing is a strategy to portray a brand story in a way that will catch the attention of the target consumer (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). DCM has enabled a shift of paradigm in market functioning from persuasive selling to collaborative helping (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Many authors suggest that the core purpose of content marketing is to identify, create, and convey a brand story to engage customers in preference to broadcasting promotional messages. Thus, the amplified use of content promotes the cultural shift from 'selling' to 'helping' (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

According to Holliman & Rowley (2014, P. 286), DCM is the "creation, distribution, and promotion of compelling, relevant, and timely digital content to engage customers at the appropriate point of their buying consideration process, such that it encourages them to convert to a business building outcome." These authors were among the frontiers in introducing digital content marketing in academia, highlighting DCM as a pull creation tool for B2B audiences using inbound marketing tools. Holliman & Rowley (2014) noted that organizations need to adopt the inbound marketing approach of DCM and make the customers look for branded content because of its relevancy and engaging characteristics.

However, Hollebeek & Macky (2019) have addressed DCM as a strategy rather than a marketing process, to generate and disseminate attractive, pertinent, and timely content to attain the consumers' attention, enhance engagement, and add value to the purchase decision process. The foundation of DCM is based on a genuine desire to add value to customers' lives by educating them while it can be used to foster brand awareness, engagement, trust, and loyalty (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019) which contrasts with the study of Holliman & Rowley (2014).

On the other hand, Terho et al., (2022) defined DCM as a three-dimensional construct and viewed DCM as a customer-centric approach to digital marketing communication. This digital marketing communication aims to generate intelligence about customers' journeys, facilitate problem-solving by offering valuable content portfolios, and engage them with relevant content-sharing to satisfy their timely needs. Terho et al., (2022) identified three customer-centric principles of DCM which are inbound logic, personalization, and customer journey facilitation in the

conceptualization of DCM. They expressed these principles as the heart of B2B DCM communication.

Wang et al., (2019) also focused on B2B digital content marketing, and the authors differentiated content marketing from the other marketing approaches in terms of its nature and objectives. According to Wang et al. (2019), DCM does not seek to persuade customers to buy, unlike advertising-centric marketing. Rather it creates valuable content for customers directing to a product or service and lets the customers find the product by themselves to find their value by encountering the content.

The two key elements in DCM are valuable content, by which information flows from businesses to customers in building a customer relationship (Holliman & Rowley, 2014), and electronic channel, by which DCM managers decide which platform to choose in reaching out to the target audience and promote the product (Fan et al., 2024). This customer relationship is developed and maintained through a dynamic exchange of information between the brand and consumers (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019, Hollebeek et al., 2016).

However, this study adopted the definition of Wahid et al., (2023) where the authors have combined the definition of Holliman & Rowley (2014), Hollebeek & Macky (2019), and Terho et al., (2022). Wahid et al., (2023, p. 1813) defined that "DCM is the identification, creation, and dissemination of valuable and digitized content to engage customers, with the final goal of enhancing marketing performance." This thesis emphasizes the notion of improving content marketing performance through the emergence of digital technologies like GAI. Thus, this definition suits the purpose of the study.

2.1.3 Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI)

GAI is a branch of AI systems that can generate new content through text, images, audio, video, and other forms of media (Surarla et al., 2023). According to De Cremer et al., (2023), GAI is a new generation AI technology that can produce digital content only based on the prompts given by a user. To simply define the concept; GAI can provide the user with digital content when asked with a specific query. Based on the nature of the query/prompt, the nature and complexity of the output varies. This system of GAI is defined by Wahid et al., (2023) as a 'conversational' tool since they allow the user to provide additional prompts and specifications based on which the output is further refined. So, combining all these definitions GAI can be defined as a superior technology that facilitates the content generation of various formats (text, image, audio, animation, etc.) based on the prompt or specification conversationally given by the user. Some contemporary examples of such GAI tools are ChatGPT (text or image-based), Midjourney (visual art and image), InVideo (social media video), and Sarah AI (customer support).

Extant research on GAI from a technology perspective has explained it as a performance enhancer in the marketing field by creating a bigger impact on marketing processes and outcomes (Kshetri et al., 2024), offering personalized marketing content (Guni et al., 2021), providing personalized recommendation systems (Huang & Rust, 2021) and to ensure a good customer experience (Gupta et al., 2020). According to HubSpot (2024), 70% of the markets in the industry are continuously investing in content marketing while a quarter of them are likely to increase their content marketing budget, which hints that the increased demand for content marketing is driving results for the brands.

Among the various technologies that contributed to enhancing the scale of DCM performance, GAI is one of the most influential as it uses machine learning technology and learns from each prompt given by users along with a machine-guided algorithm (Kshetri et al., 2024). If we try to explore the technology of GAI; natural language generation (NLG) is one of the key technologies behind it which helps the system to think like a human, forwarding the system to generate human-like content. According to Reisenbichler et al., (2022), using the NLG technology allows content creators and marketers to generate human-like content including texts, audio, graphics, and video. NLG as a technology behind GAI, can assist in the creation of domain-specific marketing content (Heaven, 2020) and reduce the organizational expenditure in creating digital marketing content while also increasing the rate of content creation (Reisenbichler et al., (2022).

The rise of GAI has opened the door for automated content creation. Wang et al., (2019) referred to artificial intelligence-generated content (AIGC) using GAI algorithms in assisting or replacing human intervention in creating personalized, high-quality content at a faster pace with reduced cost. AIGC consists of two aspects, i) understanding the user intent, ii) using the user intent to create versatile content. ChatGPT is the most widely known GAI system which is a generative pre-trained transformer (GPT), is based on a large language model (LLM) that made it capable to understand human instructions (input) and generate human-like texts (Wang et al., 2019). ChatGPT initially was developed based on the GPT-3.5 language model but the advancement of LLM has improved GPT-4 to understand multimodal tasks with increased accuracy and offer more accurate results. With technological advancements and growing demand for digital content, GAI-generated content has gained global exposure and proven higher potential in numerous fields ranging from education, entertainment, media, art, and obviously in marketing and advertisement (Wang et al., 2019). Large tech companies like OpenAI, Microsoft, Google, NVIDIA, and social networking site 'X' are currently working with their GAI innovation and products.

GAI has seen rapid growth recently in its wider acceptance in the field of marketing, especially in content creation, content personalization, and insight generation (Kshetri et al., 2024). Wider acceptance of GAI as a tool for enhancing marketing performance among mid-level and junior-level marketers has set the

notion of increased adoption of GAI in the marketing arena. According to Buttle & Stan (2015), the adoption of digital technologies supports and leads organizations in delivering more relevant, timely, and personalized communication through chosen digital platforms that ultimately ensure valuable customer experience. Improved customer experience results in better customer engagement with brands, higher customer loyalty, and enhanced performance of a firm (Barari et al., 2021). As GAI is only in the initial phase as a technology in digital marketing domain, more amplified and diversified use of it is yet to be explored.

2.2   Theoretical Framework: Effect of GAI on Marketing Process and Outcome

Adoption of GAI in the wider DCM applications is only viable when it can provide better results for the firm in attaining the desired marketing outcome. Considering this thought Kshetri et al. (2024) proposed a theoretical model on the effect of GAI in the marketing process and outcomes of the firm (Figure 2) which may define the ability of GAI as a substitute for human content creators, hence directly related as a subject of this research. The solid arrow in the model indicates direct influence and the dashed arrows indicate indirect influence of the key factors.
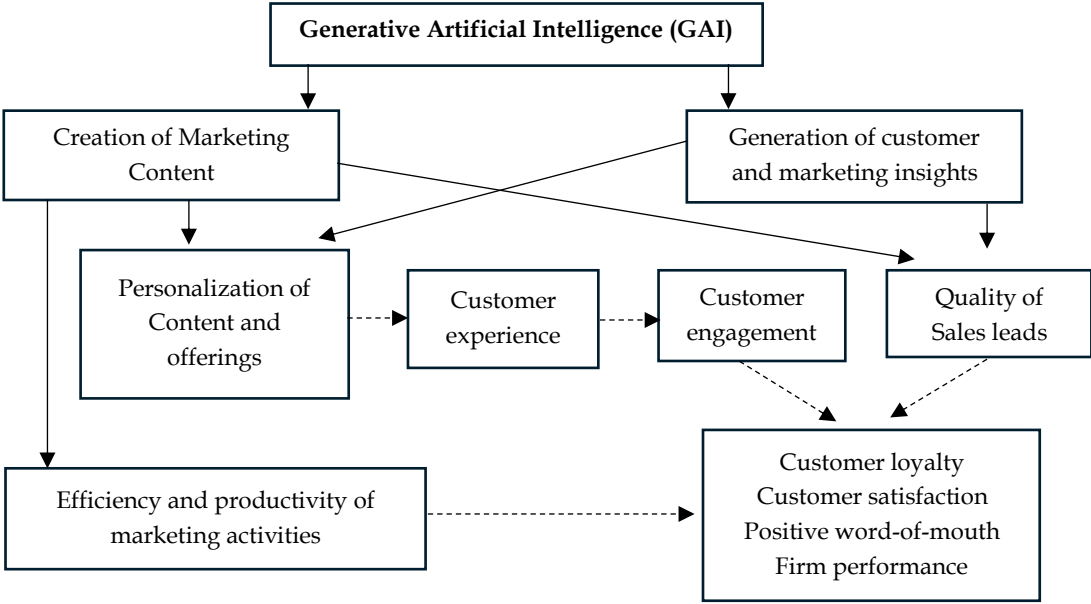
Figure 2: Effect of GAI in marketing process and outcomes (Kshetri et al., 2024, P. 5)

The given theoretical framework is the schematic representation of the propositions of how the broader application of GAI can influence the wider marketing activities of the companies. Content creation and marketing begins with

a deeper understanding of customer needs and alignment of organizational motives from DCM communication (Lemke et al., 2011). Hence, customer data plays an important role in creating marketing content that is personalized to specific target groups. Although personalization of marketing content is important to leverage optimum marketing outcomes, it is hard to apply since gathering customer data from all internal and external sources and integrating those data into the different functional channels of the firm is not easy to deliver optimized product, price, communication, and distribution (Vesanen & Raulas, 2006). GAI tools can strongly facilitate the creation of personalized content promptly with the support of available customer data which initiates the second proposition of generating customer data and insight with the use of GAI tools (Kshetri et al., 2024). As the GAI tools are adaptative and use ML technology (Kshetri et al., 2024), they can replicate customers' thinking patterns and generate customer insights based on their demographic, behavioral, and historical data. The proposition of Kshetri et al., (2024) argued that GAI tools are more effective in generating personalized content using customer insights compared to the previous generation technologies. Marketing data organizations like- Salesforce have developed their own GAI tool that utilizes other open-source GAI services by which it can access the entire 360-degree CRM database and guide the system to create an overview of existing or new customers (Kerner, 2023).

Personalization of content is one of the most sought-after things for the digital marketer though it is not easy and takes a lot of time and manpower. Customer experience is largely influenced by personalized content (Gupta et al., 2020). GAI has enabled content marketers to not only achieve greater customer insight and create content but also to create personalized content (Kshetri et al., 2024). Analyzing the buyer persona and contextualizing variations of content is possible to create with GAI that has a great impact on marketing outcomes.

A basic marketing funnel always generates awareness among the customers and leads the journey with better experience, and engagement, and makes them a qualified lead to eventually convert them into consumers (Rose & Pulizzi, 2011). Creating digital content that can enhance customer engagement, has the credibility to generate quality leads for business (Meire et al., 2019). The research of Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) has shed light on the role of content marketing as a key factor in lead generation. But arguably it comes with the delivery of exceptional customer value through content. GAI tools can be used in crafting relevant, personalized, and timely content for resonating customer experience and engagement that may generate quality sales leads (Kshetri et al., 2024). So, from the literature analysis, it can be said that the foundation of harnessing quality sales leads is developed by relevant customer data, insight, and personalization to create content and efficiency of content delivery.

Though content creation and marketing are intellectual work and often crafted with creativity, improved productivity, and efficiency can be a major success

factor for digital marketers (Kshetri et al., 2024). The term efficiency mostly indicates the reduction of cost, time, and manpower in creating content (Dwivedi et al., 2021). GAI tools can play a big role in enhancing content creation productivity and efficiency with automated content, many variations, and the speed of delivery (The Conference Board, 2023). According to McKinsey and Company (2023) report, increased productivity of GAI can help marketers save 5%-15% of the marketing cost. Better productivity and efficiency in content production and marketing eventually contribute to the faster delivery of customer value, experience (Buttle & Stan, 2015), creating engagement and generating leads (Bernard, 2023). All these factors come down to helping marketers achieve customer loyalty, satisfaction, positive WOM, and greater firm performance.

Thus, this theoretical framework proposed by Kshetri et al., (2024) has portrayed how GAI can contribute to DCM by automating content creation and customer insight generation. In this study, their model is analyzed considering how these effects can influence human skills in content marketing and to what extent the GAI can be utilized as a substitute for human-administered content creation and marketing.

2.2.1   GAI in Marketing Insight Generation

The success of digital marketing content can be derived from the accurate identification of customer needs with the right message to communicate. Hence, generating effective customer insight from large customer datasets has immense importance for digital marketers (Ratajczak et al., 2023). GAI applications in marketing can identify look-alike customers, create different customer personas, and segment customers according to different phases of the relationship life cycle and specific contexts (Frow & Payne, 2007; Kshetri et al., 2024).

The ability to offer better customer insight in GAI is possible because of the technology at its core. Large Language Model (LLM), Machine Learning (ML), and Natural Language Generation (NLG) are among the key foundational technologies in various GAI tools (Kshetri et al., 2024; Reisenbichler et al., 2022). Language model technology uses pre-trained datasets to come up with new content according to the prompts or necessity (Susarla et al., 2023). Similarly, the GAI tool that is created to harness customer insights is employed with large volumes of customer data which enables the system to provide better customer insight compared to previous technologies or manual analysis (Sullivan, 2023). In addition, the ML technology enables the AI system to learn from existing prompts, conversations, user behavior, and purchase history (Horsey, 2023). So, with time the GAI tool is better able to understand the motive of the prompt and provide optimized results. As the users interact more with certain categories of content, the AI system can refine the recommendations for the users based on the data acquired. As a result, the future

content recommendation system becomes more tailored according to customer preference which contributes to the personalization of content (AI & Insights, 2023).

Customer profiling is one of the tasks of digital marketers that can be efficiently done with the help of AI (Kshetri et al., 2024). For example, one of the leading CRM software solution organizations Salesforce has developed Einstein GPT that allows it access to the whole CRM database which is also integrated with the cloud, visual analysis platform, and messaging app (Kerner, 2023). As a result, the users can research the new customers and get an overview of the new customers which has been possible with the integration of AI in the process (Kshetri et al., 2024). Since the customer preference for the product or services changes with time, the GAI-based CRM system can use that data to offer more compelling product or service recommendations for customers.

However, improved customer insight leads marketers to generate more personalized content and achieve quality sales leads for the firm (Reines, 2023). When AI-enabled services can deliver more data about customers, many GAI-based tools can provide personalized text, image generation, video creation, or even email communication for firms. It can also help reach potential look-alike customers who have not reached out to the firm yet for products or services (Moulton, 2023). LLM systems also help to evaluate the process of lead qualification as a part of lead generation by assessing the quality of leads. As a result, the sales team can target the leads that have the highest possibility of conversion which increases the firms' sales efficiency (Moulton, 2023).

2.2.2   Role of GAI in Content Creation

Content creation is the joint process of multiple departments in an organization to meet the content requirement (Terho et al., 2022). The emergence of GAI brings change to the conventional content creation process by augmenting and transforming the content (Wahid et al., 2023). Hence, the need for collaboration with several departments and experts has decreased. Artificial intelligence is designed and programmed to self-learn from the data or input given, and continuously learn from the response of the users to the given solution (Petrescu et al., 2022). Automated machine learning algorithms, NLG, artificial neural networks, and text mining technologies have enabled GAI in making the technological wonder in different fields (Wang et al., 2019). In the B2B context, GAI can help organizations break down big data and transform it into meaningful insight to optimize knowledge and make effective business decisions and marketing strategies (Farrokhi et al., 2020; Petrescu et al., 2022).

NLG, as a branch of GAI, has multiple applications created to help both commercial users and consumers. NLG is being used in digital voice assistance and chatbot technology in responding to the user. Similarly, emails and text messages also employ NLG in reading texts, suggesting words, drafting emails, and are

broadly used in summarizing website content, writing product descriptions, and drafting social media posts (Petrescu et al., 2022). For instance, search engine optimization (SEO) is a major part of the digital marketing effort which is necessary to generate organically grown higher ranking in the search engine result page (SERP) to attain more traffic, and subsequently gain more revenue (Liu & Toubia, 2018). High competition in achieving higher ranking in the SERP, firms invest heavily in search engine optimized content, for which they need to rely on SEO experts who can create valuable content. This process is both time-consuming and costly for businesses (Petrescu et al., 2022). Moreover, the search engine algorithms are frequently updated which nudges the SEO experts to follow the heuristics process in creating content and remain uncertain regarding the outcome of SEO investment. The use of GAI has made the work of SEO experts easier by helping them create relevant content for their websites (Petrescu et al., 2022). Content is the primary factor in search engine rankings and content creation with GAI facilitates improved SEO efforts for firms. However, the search ad criteria in search engines required manual input previously which is now mostly automated, and based on the content of the ads, the search engine algorithm decides the ranking of the website, reachability of the ad, and overall marketing performance.

A wide range of GAI tools are now available to facilitate DCM activities (Table 1). A survey conducted by Bank of America in 2023 has shown that 59% of the respondents who are 18-55 years old are using ChatGPT while 51% are using Microsoft's Bing and 31% use Google's Bird (Quarles, 2023). Along with these general-purpose serving GAI systems, many GAI tools are available to serve the DCM needs of marketers.

Table 1: Example of GAI tools in marketing (Kshetri et al., 2024)

Organization	GAI tool	Application in Content Creation	Example of usage
OpenAI	ChatGPT	Text based content creation, brainstorming, creativity testing, script writing, personalization	Tome is an AI powered storytelling tool helping to create presentation using digital contents
OpenAI	DALL-E	Customer images based on prompt	Mattel used DALL-E to design new hot-wheel car model.
Meta	Sandbox	Creating variations of a copy, background generation, image cropping	Jones Road Beauty used Sandbox to create different versions of ads.
Midjourney	Midjourney	Creating images based on the text/visual prompt	PrimeCare (elder care service) used it in creating visuals for blogs.

Jasper.ai	Jasper.ai	Creating marketing content (blogs/ product description/ ad copy)	Goosehead Insurance created blog articles for online campaign for potential clients
Peppertype .ai	Peppertype .ai	Creating short copies, product description	Meta, Adobe, Amazon and some 800 organizations using it
Copy.ai	Copy.ai	Optimizing marketing content, ad copies	Airtable, a cloud-based platform and database service provider uses it for its marketing contents

Adoption of these GAI tools makes the content creation process easier for the firms. However, it also threatens the role of digital content marketers, content creators, copywriters, and graphics designers in advertising firms. Simply, all roles related to content creation and marketing may face difficulties soon because GAI tools can work as an efficient substitute. According to the study by Ahmed & Ganapathy (2021), 56.5% of content marketers are using GAI for content tailoring or personalization. Marketers are now also putting additional budgets into adopting AI-enabled content segmentation and adopting AI-based marketing automation. Similarly, Fan et al., (2024) stated that Artificial Intelligence Generated Content (AIGC) has gained the pick momentum because it facilitates greater creativity, enhanced design process, customized content, and higher accessibility to a wider audience rather than only B2B sectors. However, from the cost efficiency perspective, firms may consider using GAI tools heavily in the future considering an average content marketer salary is nearly USD 112,000 in the United States (Content Marketing Institute, 2023), which can fairly support a wider array of DCM services for firms in nearly future when costs of GAI tools will shrink more.

2.2.3 Personalization of Content and Offerings

A key purpose of utilizing digital technologies in marketing is to help organizations generate and deliver personalized and relevant communication through a digital platform (Buttle & Stan, 2015). Personalization of offers has become a demand for customers as the generalization of offers is becoming obsolete. Research carried out by McKinsey & Company (2021) revealed that business organizations that have mastered personalized offerings can generate 40% more revenue than the average market players. The immense growth of digital interactions through digital content has surged customer expectations of personalization. The McKinsey and Company (2021) research also addressed that 71% of consumers demand that firms offer personalized interaction and 76% of consumers expressed their frustration when they don't get it. So, it gives a strong reflection to the firms that non-personalization of offerings or communication through content can pose a business threat and lead to low-loyalty relationships

with consumers as personalization matters now more than ever before. DCM is an efficient way to deliver personalized content and offerings to the target audience.

According to Hollebeek & Macky (2019), DCM is focused on long-term sales growth and the first attempt to do so is creating engagement and trust with consumers through individualized offerings. This is the contrast of DCM to directly add value to consumers' communication channels. Nagy & Midha (2014) addressed this DCM audience as the earned audience because personalized communication is something that audiences always seek out and it helps the firm not only to engage them with content but also with the brand. In the B2B context, Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) emphasized that the value of digital content depends on its ability to offer personalized communication and solutions to professionals. Thus, organizations need to have the capability to personalize the content and must deliver it according to the dynamic needs of customers on time.

The personalization principle has been emphasized in the study of Terho et al., (2022) where optimizing the customer content fit has been emphasized to deliver personalized content promptly using the insight from the customer journey intelligence. The necessity to identify the specific buyer persona to deliver personalized content is inevitable to facilitate the customer journey with enhanced customer experience. Moreover, McKinsey & Company (2021) shows that personalization of content directly influences the buying behavior of consumers across the different phases of the customer life cycle. This research shows that 76% of consumers have expressed that they are more likely to consider purchasing from a brand that offers personalized content and communication and creates positive word-of-mouth.

Application of GAI tools in marketing to sophisticated responses at the individual level to automate suitable personalized content marketing strategy (Bennett, 2023). Some of the tools mentioned in Table 1 can create hyper-personalized product information for individuals, offer better recommendations, and improve the overall customer experience at the right time. The ability to provide personalization is the foremost application of GAI in the field of marketing (Kshetri et al., 2024). Thus, the adoption of GAI in the digital content marketing field may enhance the content marketing initiative to deliver effective personalized content based on customer profiles and drive higher engagement, and as a result, the firm may land into higher revenue generation.

2.2.4   DCM in Customer Experience and Purchase Journey Facilitation

Customer experience is a subjective variable that is specific to a certain context and broader environmental factors influence customers' responses (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). The more customers are surrounded by digitalization, the more digital content marketing becomes a major contributing as a single environmental factor. Terho et al., (2022) have explained that customer-centricity is closely related

to content creation based on customer needs to serve the improved customer experience at the various stages of the purchase journey. Since GAI is highly contributing to content personalization, it can significantly influence the customer experience to a certain level. GAI can use contextualization of experience in creating content to improve content personalization and relevancy that is tailored to local conditions (Bernerd, 2023). The ability to create versatility in content creation and delivery has enabled GAI to be one of the breakthrough technologies in the DCM field.

The motive of the DCM has evolved from just building awareness to customer journey facilitation, meaning to help them get the right information and make a better purchase decision (Terho et al., 2022). Holliman & Rowley (2014) emphasized that firms should focus on creating streamlined and compelling routes to guide customers toward their purchase journey. In support of this statement and to add more context, Wall & Spinuzzi (2018) specified that the firms should design the array of individual contents sequentially with different objectives that will address the quests of customers at different stages of their journey (information search, evaluation, comparison, etc.) and move them closer to make a purchase decision. However, in the study of Terho et al. (2022), the customer centricity of the firms is emphasized which inherently facilitates the customer journey in DCM because customer centricity is closely connected to the content creation and serving the customers with shared information during various stages of the buying journey.

Terho et al., (2022) have explained different DCM components necessary for customer facilitation in the B2B marketing field. It includes the formation of a buyer persona, mapping the customer journey, and analyzing customer engagement. Forming a buyer persona is important to understand and form an avatar of the potential buyer and to identify the inbound communication needs. Grewal & Sridhar (2021) focus on the key individuals in the complex B2B buying center who have a higher influence on the buying decision while forming the persona. On the other hand, customer journey mapping helps to identify the key touchpoints of the buyer persona according to their information needs. It helps the supplier to engage with the potential buyer in more unique ways (Hollebeek et al., 2016). Generally, journey mapping guides the DCM with typical stages of the customer journey from need identification to the post-purchase stage (Terho et al., 2022). Analyzing customer engagement during the customer journey is emphasized to understand to which stage the customers are now moving (Marvasti et al., 2021). Application of web analytics and marketing automation technologies are prioritized in the findings of Terho et al. (2022) to track customer engagement on firm-generated content and move them toward the purchase funnel with the right content.

From the business-to-consumer (B2C) market viewpoint, Fan et al., (2024) identified the influence of the heuristic-systematic model (HSM) in influencing purchase intention. HSM dictates that information in the contents is usually processed with heuristic (less cognitive effort) and systematic (reading and

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analyzing information) processing (Li et al., 2019). According to HSM, variation of style in presenting the product information in contents influences the purchase decision-making of consumers. Objective attributes, like functional information of a product in content, drive more analytical and logical thinking of consumers. On the other hand, subjective attributes in content regarding satisfying psychological or social needs drive less analytical thinking of consumers (Fan et al., 2024). In DCM, the combination of task-related texts and abstract images usually involves product attributes while social-related texts with concrete images evoke social need. Thus, when contents are created with task-related text with abstract images in presenting a product to consumers, it mostly engages them with systematic processing and leads towards utilitarian browsing which is highly influential in increasing purchase intention (Li et al., 2019).

2.2.5   DCM in Building Customer Engagement

DCM has strong credibility in influencing the audience's behavior by creating trust and engagement differing from traditional advertising. DCM offers valuable, relevant, and useful content to targeted prospective customers. So, the communication also reaches the focused audience relevant to the business offer (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). In addition, DCM is designed to develop and sustain long-term business relationships through engagement and trust rather than pushing to make direct sales (Bowden & Mirzaei, 2020). This is achieved by the continuous delivery of content that can genuinely add value to the audience. However, DCM leads the brand to earn an audience when the audience is actively seeking the content of a particular brand which renders the audience highly connected with not only the content but also with the brands (Nagy & Midha, 2014).

Customer engagement is more than a dyadic communication between buyer and seller. It has now embedded into an ecosystem considering the impact of consumer networks and the role of those knotworks in cocreating value (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Anderson et al., 2013; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). Hollebeek et al., (2014) defined customer engagement as a balanced emotional, cognitive, and hedonic activity when interacting with brand-related content. In a further study Hollebeek et al., (2014) added that consumer engagement relates to greater consumer loyalty, retention, and profitability. Referral from an engaged consumer has been found 20 times more impactful compared to a marketing message (Goh et al., 2013).

Bowden and Mirzaei (2020) have argued that self-brand connection, which is in line with self-schema theory is a key driver for consumer engagement loyalty. According to their research model, self-brand connection triggers cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social engagement that later contributes to brand advocacy which is also supported by several literatures (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Naumann et al., 2020). DCM offers the brand tools to create authentic and genuine

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communication with the target customers, also creating value in their lives and supporting their lifestyles (Denning, 2016). Moreover, DCM is designed to create and retain relationships with consumers through brand connection and engagement (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). From a psychological point of view, Prentice et al., (2019) explained that DCM provides a clear intrinsic motivation to the consumers which plays a vital role in self-brand connection and engagement that is often missing in incentivized communication by business.

However, online brand communities also profoundly influence the brand engagement effort which is often created as a byproduct of content marketing (Bowden & Mirzaei, 2020). From the consumers' perspective, DCM communication channels along with online communication provide convenient, efficient access to relevant information (Tiago and Veríssimo, 2014). Increased integration of digital environment with digitally accessed customers has made DCM a necessary tool for customer engagement.

2.2.6 Efficiency and Productivity of Marketing Activities

Digital technologies have helped marketers reduce marketing and communication costs while increasing marketing efficiency. Research carried out by Parveen et al., (2015) has found that social media helped firms to reduce marketing and customer service costs. In contrast, previous literature has shown that the implications of IT in marketing activities can increase the lead management efficiency for the business which leads to increased sales conversion (Kuruzovich, 2013). Findings from the research of Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) state that the marketing automation process has significantly improved the efficiency of marketing and sales operations among organizations. It is needless to explain that marketing automation is one of the key developments in the DCM field. A significant proportion of content delivery and communication activities have been automated and sales leads are prequalified in the system so that the sales department can accurately focus on converting the leads (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). It also has a positive influence on the volume of quality sales leads generated with marketing efforts. Integration of digital content marketing with marketing automation enables content marketers to utilize automation classification in overcoming the prospect selection process in sales and increasing efficiency.

The accessibility of AI technology and its ease of use have influenced digital marketers to adopt it in daily tasks like content creation of PPC advertisements, repetitive tasks, and managing personalized emails (Digital Marketing Institute, 2023). A survey among the members of the Digital Marketing Institute (2023) has revealed that 45% of AI users have expressed an increase in their marketing productivity with AI. The most common applications of AI in the digital marketing field are content creation, customer service, customer segmentation, SEO, PPC ads, data analytics, and email marketing (Digital Marketing Institute, 2023). AI tools are

used in various degrees for these marketing activities where some tasks are done as a part of the research, some are for repetitive tasks, and some are fully executed with AI for increasing the speed of execution, more variations, and reduction of costs.

  According to McKinsey & Company (2021), organizations that have mastered the personalization of content have invested in AI-driven decision-making capabilities so that they can respond to and serve customers in real time. By leveraging predictive analytics and propensity models, AI systems can determine which content to serve to which customer. As a result, it helps marketers deliver the right message to the right customer through the right channel at the right time to facilitate a smoother customer journey efficiently (McKinsey & Company, 2021). Hence, a notable increase in productivity is seen. The theoretical framework of Kshetri et al., (2024) has emphasized marketing productivity and efficiency because of GAI in creating marketing content. According to the author, the sheer ability to generate a large volume of content in less time compared to humans while using personalization in content and being contextually relevant has taken AI to the next level as a marketing tool. For example, a British advertising firm WPP is reported working with GAI for an advertising campaign for an FMCG company, Nestle where shooting for the commercial may cost only one-tenth of the normally produced commercial (Kshetri et al., 2024). So, GAI is strongly leveraging the DCM field to optimize marketing efficiency to different degrees.

3 Research Methodology

This research aims to develop knowledge and understanding of a certain subject matter under a phenomenon and the research objective guides the methodological solution of the study (Adams et al., 2014). This chapter addresses the methodological choices that are suitable for this study. In explaining the methodological options, the research methods are discussed along with the data collection process through interviews and data analysis procedure for this study.

3.1 Qualitative Research Method

The methodology of research guides the pathway of conducting a study, following a certain domain or branch of study pattern, in reaching the most valid conclusion (Malhotra, 2008). Research methodology is related to the science and philosophy accounted for in the study (Adams et al., 2014). Based on the research problem and research questions, an appropriate research methodology is identified that drives the whole process including research approach, method, data collection, and interpretation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The research method, theoretical framework, and collected data need to align in answering the research questions to draw the desired result from this study.

This study follows the exploratory research design and qualitative research method. Exploratory research is devoted to exploring the insights and perceptions of a problem that is not clearly defined (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Qualitative research analyzes non-numerical data to understand the concepts, opinions, and experiences surrounding a certain phenomenon (Malhotra, 2008). Qualitative research method looks for the phenomenon to be studied holistically and explains the reality from the

respondents' perspective. This method can be useful to collect in-depth insights into a phenomenon and generate new research ideas (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Qualitative study helps to develop theories and hypotheses whereas quantitative studies focus on explaining them (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Thus, qualitative methods are popular and effective in understanding and interpreting business issues in different contexts.

Eriksson & Kovalainen (2016) also stressed that the qualitative method of research is effective where there is already moderate knowledge established in any specific context and hence interpretation and understanding of the insights have become the priority in the process. In this study, qualitative research is suitable for driving a better understanding of the influence of GAI in the DCM field. In this study's context, a managerial problem has been identified which is the influence of GAI in digital content marketing and how it is affecting the skills of content marketers. The research framework guided by Kshetri et al. (2024, p. 5) "The effect of GAI on marketing processes and outcome" has been analyzed in the context of DCM to develop a deeper understanding of how GAI is influencing the current and future skills of content marketers. Insights from the content marketers were gathered through a qualitative interview process while the theoretical perspectives were also studied from academic literature.

Since, qualitative research involves the thinking and feeling of people in a subjective manner, rather than measuring in units (Silverman, 2014), qualitative data have been used in forming understanding, explaining, and interpreting the different perspectives of DCM which are influenced by GAI.

3.2   Data Collection

Different approaches are used in the data collection process in qualitative research and some key methods in collecting primary data are interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), netnography, observation, and on-field notes (Hair et al., 2015). In this research, the interview technique has been used as the data collection method. For business-related research, the interview is a very effective technique to identify and gather insights from the respondents along with their behavioral reflection on the subject matter (Tracy, 2019). As a result, in-depth information on the research issue can be developed (Adams et al., 2014). Though the interview is a time-consuming method, the same reason made it a suitable technique to understand the latent insights of the relevant stakeholders on the research issue (Adams et al., 2014). Through interviews, a detailed discussion may take place where respondents may discuss frankly with their thoughts. However, interview is also suitable when dealing with contemporary and new phenomena in the business industry to understand the underlying reasons with open-ended questions with

one-to-one discussion. As the phenomenon of this study is very contemporary and yet to be explored by researchers, qualitative interviews with content marketing professionals in the DCM field can be valuable in understanding the phenomenon concerning the research framework of Kshetri et al., (2024).

3.2.1 Interview Sample Selection

In selecting the interview participants, it was important to consider that the interviewees can reflect adequate insights into the discussion from their expertise and experience. So, it was a prerequisite in planning the sample selection for the interview. Purposeful sampling and snowball sampling techniques have been employed in finding the interview samples. Purposeful sampling is a qualitative research sampling technique where samples are selected based on a specific purpose rather than random (Suri, 2011). It is also known as a selective sampling technique. This technique is appropriate when the researcher has a clear purpose in mind when selecting the samples and when are aware of the characteristics or attributes that the researcher wants to explore while that specific group of people represents those characteristics to be studied (Suri, 2011). Moreover, snowball sampling was used where the samples were identified with a chain of recommended informants (Malhotra, 2008).

Following the purposeful and snowball sampling, the identification of interview samples is followed by three criteria. Firstly, the sample needs to be a digital marketing professional with at least three years of experience that justifies the sample is well knowledgeable on the DCM process and is aware of the recent transformation of GAI in the DCM field. Secondly, the sample needs to be in such a role where they either contribute/execute digital content creation or DCM decision-making process for the organization. Lastly, the sample needs to have somewhat experience of using any GAI tool in their DCM work role that ensures the samples are aware of how GAI is affecting their skills in their marketing process and outcome. Based on these criteria, samples are selected across different industries irrespective of the size of the organization because DCM communication and the application of GAI could be different across industries like B2B and B2C.

Identified interview samples are reached by email and LinkedIn. The preliminary email request entailed the invitation to participate in this research mentioning the key themes of this research. Thus, the interview samples are able to know what the study expects from their experience in the DCM field. In a couple of cases, interview samples are identified through the suggestion of the targeted sample considering the suitable knowledge depth for this research.

3.2.2 Semi-Structured Interview

The interview structure may differ according to the theme of the research which can be structured, semi-structured to unstructured interviews. As the name implies, a structured interview is equipped with a prepared questionnaire following a specific order with a predetermined topic, also known as a formal interview (Tracy, 2019). However, semi-structured interviews only follow a predetermined thematic framework where questions are asked based on the framework, having some preset questions and some not (Hair et al., 2015). However, in an unstructured interview, none of the questions are predetermined or are in order, rather interviewer asks open-ended questions. Further direction of the interview relies on the participant's responses in collecting data (Hair et al., 2015). It is also called a non-directive interview. Structured interviews often employ a close-ended questionnaire with a preset number of questions while semi-structured and unstructured interviews follow open-ended questions while the number of questions is not fixed (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). In collecting the primary data for this research semi-structured interviews have been used in gathering information to satisfy the research questions.

Following the context and subject, this study requires open-ended feedback from digital content marketers, content creators, and marketing decision-makers regarding their practice in content creation and their thoughts or feelings with the shift of this paradigm in adopting GAI tools in the marketing process. Semi-structured interview allows some flexibility in the interview process to go beyond predefined questions or change the order of the questions depending on the direction of the participant's responses (Hair et al., 2015). On the other hand, a structured interview only limits the proximity of discussion under a boundary of preset questions which may not be fruitful in this case (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Unstructured interviews are also risky due to the fear of missing out on any important aspects of the research questions if the direction of discussion goes too far away from the research agenda because of not having a structure of framework or questions.

Semi-structured interview focuses on the 'what' and 'how' questions highlighting the research questions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). However, different keywords and concepts of this study may create different meanings to the people working in different industries, thus semi-structured interviews are effective to create meaning from various perspectives to lead them towards the key objectives. In designing the semi-structured interview, it has been ensured the respondents are relevant to the DCM field and well-knowledgeable on the research subject. In conducting a semi-structured interview, a set of open-ended questions has been prepared following the research objective and theoretical framework to guide the conversation during the interview which can be found in *Appendix 1*.

The interview began with a brief introduction to the research subject by the researcher and with a few warm-up questions. The introductory discussion follows

the conversation about the industry background of the interviewees, their job roles concerning DCM, and their work experience. The interview is later followed by the discussion under four main sections highlighting the key concepts of content creation, the influence of GAI in DCM, marketing productivity, skills, and possible threats in the future for content marketers. Interview questions demanded the interviewees discuss their views on the subject matter. In addition, follow-up questions are asked to clarify ambiguous thinking from respondents and to formulate a deeper understanding of the matter. Moreover, finishing the interview in the promised time duration (45-60 minutes) was a challenge since some of the discussions went beyond the standard timeframe. Simplification of the questions was followed to break down the complex topics in a simplistic manner. However, oversimplification is avoided to maintain the generalized meaning of key concepts.

Seven interviews were conducted during March 2024 as shown in Table 2. In the data collection phase, seven interviews were considered enough since the last few interviews reflected similar themes without contributing any additional insights. Interviews were performed mostly with marketing managers, digital marketing strategists, digital marketing consultants, and content specialists who closely work with content creation in the digital marketing field and have experience using GAI tools. Interview participants are from different industries in Finland and Bangladesh though many of their operations are across borders. Most of the participants have working experience in different industries from the executive position and have grown into their current roles with proven proficiency. Interview participants have direct experience working in the DCM field between 4 to 14 years which is effective in getting a comprehensive view of the makeshift in the content creation process with the emergence of GAI. Experience from different industries and cultures looks reasonable to provide a holistic view of the research questions, followed by the theoretical framework. A few organizations where the interview participants are representing are startups in the scaling phase and some of them are big corporates.

Table 2: Profile of Interview Participants

Interview Participant	Interviewee Job Title	Experience in the DCM field	Industry	B2B/B2C	Interview Length (min)
P1	Marketing & Communication Manager	14 years	Maritime Technology	B2B	58 min
P2	Marketing Manager	7 years	Advertising	B2B	75 min
P3	Digital Transformation Strategist	12 years	Travel & Tourism	B2C	57 min
P4	Entrepreneur & DM Consultant	9 years	Digital Marketing Consultancy	B2B	53 min
P5	Content Specialist	4 years	Humanitarian	B2C	61 min

| P6 | Marketing Manager | 7 years | Meditech | B2B & B2C | 68 min |
| P7 | Deputy Manager, Digital Marketing | 9 years | Agri-Machinery | B2C | 81 min |

Interviews were performed in English via online video conference using the Microsoft Team platform of Jyväskylä University. The interviews were recorded with the interviewees' consent, and auto transcription was used to record the conversation in text format. During the interview, a safe environment was created for the interview participant to reduce complexity, and biases and highlight transparency. Proper Interview protocol was followed including planning prompts, using understandable language, and not leading the thoughts of the interviewee. However, the interviewees were also informed that their identifications would be anonymized, and the organization's name would not be mentioned.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the phase where the primary data are processed following the research method to investigate and understand the real phenomena. In qualitative research, data analysis focuses on identifying and interpreting the patterns in data (Adam et al., 2014, Belk et al., 2013). As the data collection of this research followed a semi-structured interview, thematic analysis was used as the data analysis method. Qualitative data analysis is an iterative process where data is reevaluated when a new relationship or question arises. In the thematic analysis, the researcher needs to ask for themes and patterns that may arise from the research questions and look for inconsistencies (Hair et al., 2015). According to Belk et al., (2013), in qualitative research, data analysis needs to be started right away after collecting data. In identifying the themes and patterns from the data, textual analysis is done. Meaningful insights are extracted from the analysis of the patterns and conclusions are drawn.

Analysis of the qualitative data starts with limiting the primary data to a manageable size after data screening and reduction. Data reduction takes place by scrutinizing searches for different meanings and relationships while also deciding which data are closely relevant and important to keep in answering the research questions (Hair et al., 2015). Reduction of qualitative data usually starts with the interview transcription. However, transcribing all interview data is not mandatory if they do not comply with the relevance of the research questions. In the analysis process, data also need to be organized according to suitable themes to view the data and understand their relevancy (Adams et al., 2014). After screening and reducing data, it needs to be effectively displayed in a way to draw findings and conclusions. In data analysis, thematic analysis was used following the deductive data analysis approach to reduce data and identify the pattern. Thematic analysis is one of the

useful methods for qualitative analysis for identifying themes and patterns and analyzing their meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes are the key topic from the data that denotes the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Summarizing the data into themes helps understandably reduce data and creates a bridge between the key concepts and theoretical framework.

In this study, the codes are first generated from the qualitative interview data which represents a summary of the ideas and opinions of respondents on the subject matter. A brief explanation of codes that create the themes is presented in *Appendix 2*. The codes accumulate to represent the sub-themes based on the interview data and are followed by the main themes to develop the topic of the study (Figure 3). So, interview data are gradually sorted and formed into a thematic framework to subsequently provide a meaningful picture of how GAI is influencing the DCM process and outcomes from content marketers' perspectives. However, the thematic framework shows a strong resemblance to the theoretical framework proposed by Kshetri et al., (2024) since the interview was conducted coherently to understand the relevance of the components of the framework in real-life practices to find the answers to the research questions. However, the subjective experience of the researcher was used in interpreting the data. Codes were edited from the keywords of interview data with color-coded which were later collated into a Microsoft Word document for analysis.
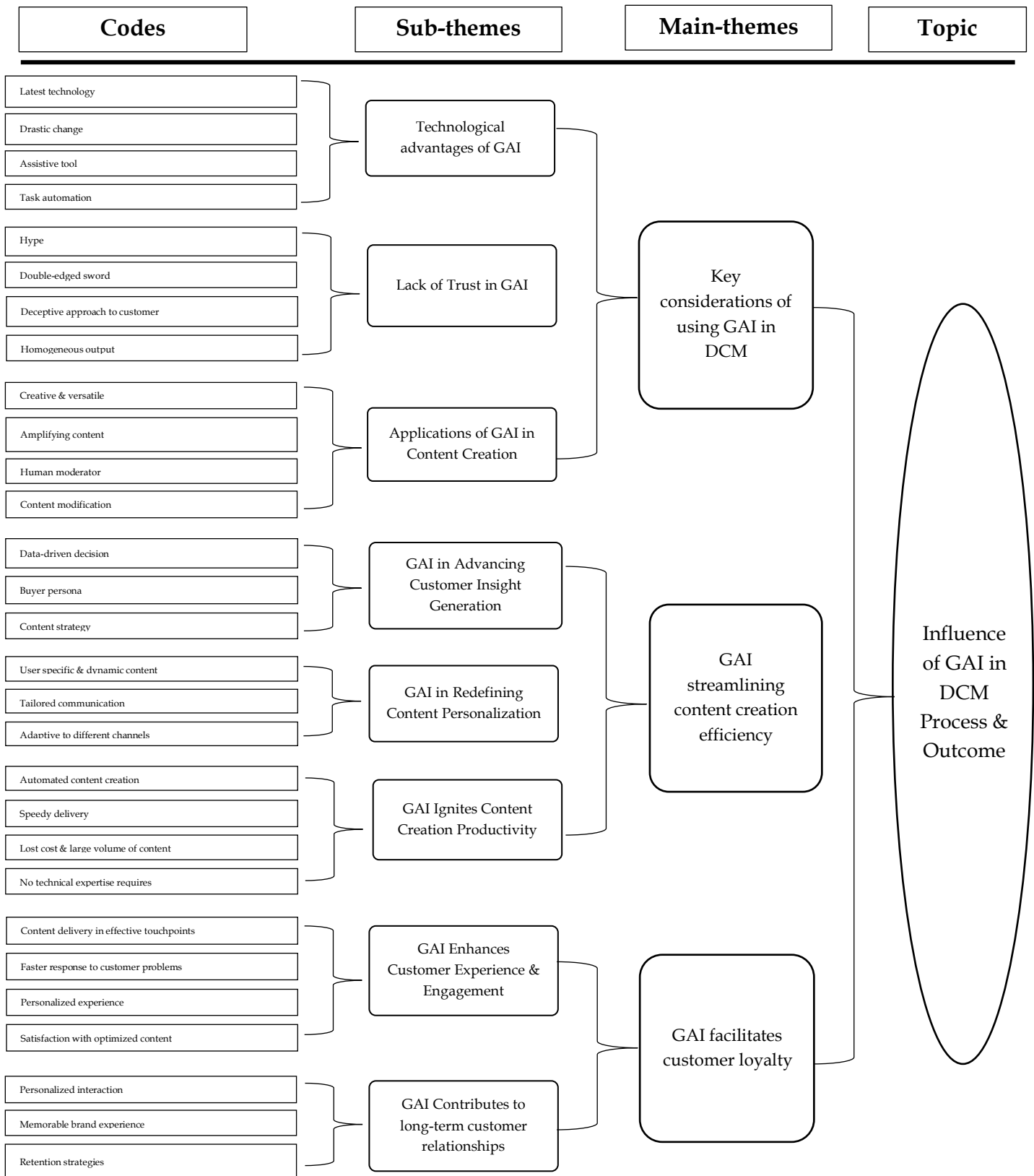
Codes	Sub-themes	Main-themes	Topic

Codes:

- Latest technology
- Drastic change
- Assistive tool
- Task automation

→ **Technological advantages of GAI**

- Hype
- Double-edged sword
- Deceptive approach to customer
- Homogeneous output

→ **Lack of Trust in GAI**

- Creative & versatile
- Amplifying content
- Human moderator
- Content modification

→ **Applications of GAI in Content Creation**

These three sub-themes → **Key considerations of using GAI in DCM**

- Data-driven decision
- Buyer persona
- Content strategy

→ **GAI in Advancing Customer Insight Generation**

- User specific & dynamic content
- Tailored communication
- Adaptive to different channels

→ **GAI in Redefining Content Personalization**

- Automated content creation
- Speedy delivery
- Lost cost & large volume of content
- No technical expertise requires

→ **GAI Ignites Content Creation Productivity**

These three sub-themes → **GAI streamlining content creation efficiency**

- Content delivery in effective touchpoints
- Faster response to customer problems
- Personalized experience
- Satisfaction with optimized content

→ **GAI Enhances Customer Experience & Engagement**

- Personalized interaction
- Memorable brand experience
- Retention strategies

→ **GAI Contributes to long-term customer relationships**

These two sub-themes → **GAI facilitates customer loyalty**

Topic: Influence of GAI in DCM Process & Outcome

Figure 3: Thematic Framework of the study

3.4   Ethical Consideration

In managing the primary data from the interview, the ethical conduct of the research has been followed, especially the privacy and confidentiality of the interviewees. Though it is not a sensitive topic to discuss, the fundamental principles of integrity in research have been maintained to respect the interviewees and limit biases in the process. All the interview participants were informed about the research with a research notification and privacy notice. It was mentioned that their data would be anonymized, and personal identities would be kept confidential. Moreover, at the beginning of the interview, participants were informed and asked permission to record the online interview and record a transcription of the whole conversation. Consent is taken from each interviewee through a signed consent form to use the data derived from the interview in the research. All the interviewees are promised to send a digital copy of the published work as a part of respect and research ethics. However, in analyzing the research data proper integrity has been shown. Unnecessary descriptions of respondent's data and usage of irrelevant academic data are controlled. Appropriate citations and sources of the data are mentioned. The researcher also tried to avoid biases in the interpretation process to follow research integrity.

4   Findings

The research findings are presented in this chapter based on qualitative data analysis. Several key themes have emerged from the interviewee's observation and thematic analysis, offering valuable insights to answer research questions. Each theme is supported by direct quotes from the interview and a detailed description to illustrate the nuanced understanding gained from the data. These results provide a comprehensive view of the impact of GAI in the DCM and lay the groundwork for discussion in the following chapter.

4.1   Key Considerations of Using GAI in DCM

The results are structured with an explanation of the main themes, followed by the sub-themes that make up the main theme. Explanation of sub-themes later leads to the description of how GAI impacts different aspects of DCM. To give a richer understanding, direct quotes from interviewees are portrayed.

The first main theme explains how the technological advantages of GAI force marketers to adopt its applications in generating better content. Like other technological tools, GAI is not completely flawless but the assistance it provides to marketers supersedes its limitations and the enterprise-wide adoption of GAI is thriving. One key finding for this theme is that GAI is an assistive tool for content creators that may assist them in amplifying content. This major theme is comprised of three sub-themes that explain different perspectives on the technological context of GAI in DCM.

Technological Advantages of GAI

Every time a new digital technology appears in the mainstream; the digital marketing landscape faces a wind of change. Many of the marketers in the interview expressed GAI as the newest technological advancement that helps marketers streamline marketing processes, especially content creation processes. With GAI's assistance, content creators' capability to generate content has been increased to a notable scale.

P1: "It's been a really crazy race toward the offerings that the latest capabilities and the latest tools for marketers."

P4: "My view on GAI in the field of marketing is that I think of it as an effective tool. The reason it is an effective tool because it makes our life easy."

P6: "It has drastically changed kind of the landscape of marketing"

P7: "What I see in overall is that AI is an innovative tool. It can change, the total marketing era."

Unlike other technological tools used in the marketing process, GAI can provide a result using LLM based on prompt while other technological tools only enhance the task output where further human commands are necessary to achieve results. Being an intelligence support system for the users, GAI can pull off repetitive tasks like- removing the background of an image, sending personalized emails, or replying to customer queries with a chatbot.

P4: "The nature of technology is that it has two sides. AI can save our time and also save our manpower. So, by default, there will be some alternatives and replacements that will be caused by the AI tool."

P6: "AI has the ability to rapidly generate concise and compelling content. It's not to say that there probably aren't great copywriters out there who can write great copy, but it is fundamentally and forever changed. And if it hasn't been totally replaced, what it has done is really kind of devalued that work, for better or worse."

The role of GAI has been getting wider in the digital marketing field during the last couple of years. GAI has increased the capabilities of digital marketers by freeing them from repetitive tasks and making some extra room to focus on the most important decision-making tasks or creative parts. So, naturally, GAI may bring a drastic change to the DCM landscape by allowing shared contribution to the content creation process which previously was executed by entirely human efforts. In contrast, most of the interviewees reflected that the change will be backed by normalizing the use of GAI tools in the DCM process like other regular productivity tools, for example, MS Office or Outlook. It has also provided a competitive edge for the firms in catching up with the latest trends to keep the customers connected. It is stated that GAI fosters a competitive advantage for marketers with its ability to perform improved content marketing and to help achieve marketing goals.

Lack of Trust in GAI

Although the use of GAI is thriving, it affects the trustworthiness of the marketers and often consumers regarding the authenticity of its output. Marketers referred to GAI as a contemporary fad in marketing that may lose popularity with time.

> P2: "So, I do believe that the use of artificial intelligence will increase. It will increase within the upcoming years. So, what I mean by this is that it is a hype right now."

> P1: "But on the other hand, it's a bit of a double-edged sword, like AI has gotten so much better, but it is still not quite there yet in in certain regards."

However, this view does not devalue GAI's ability as a technology, but the tenure of its high demand is seemingly overestimated, as addressed by some interview participants. However, this statement seems less credible because most marketers think that the use cases of GAI in content marketing will only increase because of its contribution to the core marketing process (content creation, idea generation, and task automation). However, one experienced marketer in the interview has tagged GAI as a double-edged sword. Because, on one side it helps marketers gain productivity with the efficient production of content, while on the other side, it is de-escalating the trend of skill acquisition of content creators. And the reason behind it is that GAI tools are doing skill-required tasks for them. A simple example would be the freelance graphic designers who used to work on removing backgrounds of the image are not replaced by the apps or editors that can do this task in a second. So, the necessity of learning this skill may diminish.

On the other hand, the inadequate quality of the contents is another downside that raises the trust issue. GAI as a technology has not progressed that far to understand natural human dialects or cultural differences in generating content that often requires human intervention to make content presentable.

> P3: "Content creation has been influenced by AI for a while, but you can distinguish that it is made with AI. In my perspective, this is a good thing that people can still differentiate between what is AI and what is real."

> P7: "And right now I think almost any tool you use in this AI arena they come up with a disclaimer that this tool can make mistakes. So, we cannot totally rely on them because some of those mistakes cannot be compromised sometimes."

AI lacks emotions and cultural backgrounds while creating content on a similar theme for audiences in different countries. Content creators also labeled GAI somewhat poorly for providing content that lacks originality or is pertinent. Because of not being able to understand the right context of the prompt which can be the limitation of both parties, GAI or prompt giver, the result could be far from what was looked for. As a result, a lack of trust comes into place while using GAI for

content. Moreover, in terms of the translation of content in the content creation process, AI requires more improvement. Rather than a plain translation of text or audio, it needs to add a local vibe and cultural meaning.

Since contents created or enhanced by GAI are the result of its trained dataset, homogeneity among the contents is noticeable. Thus, it is important to consider using GAI as an assistive tool rather than using it to create a complete product out of AI data.

> P1: "I think it's getting a bit too homogeneous that we are losing a bit the individual creativity."

> P7: "I have this feeling that everything that is being created, is a bit too homogeneous and too repetitive. Also, it does try to mimic human-generated content. So, at the end, we are trying to adapt ourselves to the kind of standard set by the robots which is weird."

Creating AI-generated content is not just a personal requirement, it's a necessity to stand out from the competition for marketers. However, limited or misrepresented trained dataset often leads to faulty results in content that also question its accuracy and quality. The issue of morals has been raised as a part of the categorization of content in the digital marketing field. Marketers have now access to a more detailed personal dataset of the target audience with the help of GAI tools to provide a clear picture of the customer journey which is the invasion of personal data. Moreover, one of the interviewees compared customized email with deception since the technology is depicted to be personal which is not true. A similar concept goes to chatbots where there is no real person behind thought in terms of using chatbots now mentioned. Moreover, the lack of enough tools to differentiate GAI-created content and fully human-created content often causes trust issues among the audience. The overall reliability of GAI-generated content is not enough to meet the standard but with human intervention, it can be moderated to generate the desired output.

Application of GAI in Content Creation

This theme explains what GAI tools can do in the DCM process given that a few setbacks are also in the process to deal with. First, GAI can make the content creation process uncomplicated. The technology behind GAI enables the system to search all the possible information sources on the internet and bring the result in the form of content with a prompt. With GAI, content creators are now breaking the barriers of creative block in the process and are getting a good deal of resources only through a few prompts. Although the creative part of GAI has received different opinions because of its limitations, it can certainly provide a set of different results based on the input.

P3: "….but in some cases, it's (AI) helpful. Content designers can take inspiration from AI and make their design in a way that has originality as well as artificial intelligence within the design."

P1: "…but not only like text generation, image generation, video content all of these are being heavily influenced and produced with the help of AI."

P4: "For the content creators, it's something that they're using it positively because they can amplify the number of contents they are creating with the help of AI."

Various AI tools are already used in the digital content marketing arena that are used not only to generate content in different formats but also to automate tasks as mentioned already. The interviewees also added that many tools are coming and existing tools are getting advanced. The first theme that emerged from the data pointed to the different applications of GAI for marketers according to the interviewees as mentioned in Table 3.

Table 3: Marketing applications performed by AI tools

GAI tools	Tasks performed
ChatGPT	− Generating ideas − Script − Copywriting − Social media posts − Blogs − Translation
Einstein GPT	− CRM − Personalized emails
Dall-E / Midjourney	− Image generation
Microsoft Azure	− Voiceover − Text-to-speech generation
Sarah AI	− Customer support − Team collaboration
Copilot	− Generate ideas − Coding − Copywriting − Image generation
Google Ads / Facebook Ads	− Optimize digital ad copies − Optimize targeting & retargeting − Automate bidding − Maximize ad campaign capabilities
InVideo	− Social media video generation − Marketing video generation
Jasper AI	− Social media content − Marketing content − Blogs

All these applications have enabled digital marketers to achieve a 360-degree support center surrounded by AI tools. Moreover, such diversified AI applications have influenced content creators to develop content marketing solutions for businesses entirely based on AI. In the interview, one marketing professional revealed the rise of a content agency that is providing only AI-generated content solutions to small businesses. ChatGPT is the most common and popular tool among marketers as mentioned by all the interviewees as it is the first of its kind in the industry and because it is simple to use with meaningful prompts in the form of questions. Given that GAI tools are playing the role of assistant for content creators and marketers, the ability of ChatGPT to provide simple text-based content for various purposes made it a universal tool for most digital marketers.

Moreover, AI image-generation tools like Dall-E and Midjourney are also commonly used among content creators to develop visual content. On the other hand, Google Ads and Facebook Ads use AI in their algorithm that enables the marketers to efficiently target the audience and automate their bidding. Many of the interviewees (P4 & P7) also mentioned the use of AI tools in creating voiceovers from scripts previously which was carried out by hiring voice artists. The same logic is also applied in creating video content. So, as mentioned in Table 3, the various applications of GAI signify its pivotal role in digital content marketing in recent times.

According to the interview data, marketers are now in the phase where they are still testing and exploring the use of GAI in the content creation process rather than fully relying on it.

> P3: "And right now I think almost any tool you use in this AI arena they come up with a disclaimer that this tool can make mistakes. So, we cannot totally rely on them because some of those mistakes cannot be compromised sometimes. So, human controller is necessary in the process."

> P1: "I still believe that giving your own personal touch provides a human breath into the content. It's very important because otherwise at the end of the day, everybody gonna be writing the same things and how do you stand out if everybody's doing the same?"

This situation explains adapting GAI in content creation. Content creators have reflected in the interview that they are optimistic that this trend of GAI is going to be beneficial in the long run and thus they are learning and getting acquainted with this ecosystem. Moreover, it has been also clarified that the use of GAI now is mostly focused on improving the efficiency of the content creation process rather than using the technology to get the finished result. Also, because a human moderator is still necessary for the content creation process with GAI, the role of content creators is still strongly valid in the DCM industry. The goal of GAI is to make the content creation process easier and efficient where marketers can hold control over the content quality, creativity, and its genuine nature.

4.2 GAI Streamlining Content Creation Efficiency

The second theme represents the ability of GAI to influence content creation efficiency and productivity. Content creation is a key contribution of GAI in digital marketing. Findings of the qualitative data suggest that GAI tools are helping content creators with additional resources to create more content in terms of quantity and versatility for different customer groups. Respondents addressed that text generation, image, and video generation have greatly influenced and produced with the help of GAI which is making content generation faster. However, GAI is more useful as an assistance to generate the content rather than fully relying on it to deliver content as good as expected. Hence, the interviewees emphasized GAI tools in generating ideas or creating the foundation of the content but not the entire content. Streamlining of content creation with GAI is supported by three sub-themes including GAI's presence in generating customer insight, content personalization, and content productivity.

GAI in Advancing Customer Insight Generation

In every marketing decision-making process customer data and insight plays a big role. According to the findings from the interview data, customer data sets the trajectory of marketing strategies for the business, and thus acquisition of better customer data with richer understanding can make a big difference in marketing productivity.

> P3: "To me, understanding the audience has always been my top priority when I'm involved in any marketing activities. So, AI tools can help me understand the intent of my audience or provide statistical value from large data."

> P4: "We know there are tools that enable proper data visualization that helps you to understand the data and give you insight based on which you can make data-driven decisions. It will shorten their time in analyzing data to get accurate information by minimizing the error of margin of error which is definitely helpful for organizations who make data-driven decisions."

GAI applications that are integrated with CRM databases can provide automated customer analysis for marketers. Organizations like Salesforce and HubSpot have already integrated AI tools in their CRM and content generation processes to boost performance in generating customer insight. GAI applications can guide marketers toward data-driven decision-making with minimum error and maximize the level of precision. It can be used in faster data mining and providing automated data visualization on the customer's intents. A simple example could be using GAI to automate the creation of PowerPoint presentations, visual charts, or figures using customer data. Better visualization helps marketers to understand the insights better and create quality content with personalized offers.

One of the key findings regarding customer insight is that GAI can play a strong role in tracking customer journeys and guide marketers in designing the right type of content, selecting effective touchpoints, and faster delivery of communication.

> P2: "…….the trends from that data Industry and buyer persona specifically. So, if I have 10 different industries, I have 5 to 7 different business decision-makers. Some of them are influencers, some of them are ICT people, some of them are marketing, and others are CEOs et cetera. I could have processed all that information with artificial intelligence too in sorting their persona to help me better targeting."

> P1: "GAI tools can give you customer data. They are great at that. They can give you all the different touch points that customers have been interacting with. They can give you their journey. They can give you how much time customers have spent here and there and whatnot.

> P6: "When you are equipped with a better dataset of customers and market given by AI, it is easier to plan the content roadmap for targeted output."

Hence, GAI tools can be effective in developing the buyer persona for the marketer, especially in the B2C context. Data can provide a lot of insight if properly analyzed and utilized. Utilizing the customer data, GAI tools can provide insights into buyer behavior, content preferences, engagement intensity, and segmentation of content for different customer groups. All these actions equip content marketers to generate more meaningful marketing possibilities.

GAI can also contribute to developing effective content strategies for marketers using predictive analytics. According to the interviewees, GAI technology uses advanced predictive analytics using statistical modeling of historical data and machine learning that can generate possible future outcomes. So, using GAI applications marketers can become prepared with effective content types for specific customer groups, suitable time of content publishing, future trends of campaigns, or estimated marketing expenditure.

GAI in Redefining Content Personalization

Since it is established in the literature review that customer need identification and delivering the right value has a profound impact on customer loyalty, digital content creation is also a part of that value creation process for customers according to their unique needs. Thus, this theme explains how GAI redefines the degree of content personalization for marketers and helps customers get the most relevant content according to their needs. According to findings, people are tired of getting the bombardment of ads and content into the digital platforms that may have already pushed the target audience to lose interest in the brands. One of the key findings of the interview is the dire need for content personalization, if not for individuals, at least for the narrowed customer group where GAI plays a role.

It was also stated by the interviewees that irrelevant content not only creates a negative impression for the customers but also costs a lot for the brands. Thus, content personalization has a strong connection with marketing efficiency.

P1: "If we talk about an emailing campaign or some sort of targeted advertisement campaign to sort of demographics, you can first automatically filter the targets of that campaign now which you had to do manually before. And there are huge parts of the text that can be optimized in just one command. Like if the customer is X, then generate these and that. It has worked really well for me. I have received and sent emails that were for a mass audience but looked like someone had written specifically to me."

P4: "…. with the help of AI, we can send you an e-mail where maybe I have a mug in my hand that says 'Fahad, please have a coffee with me.' And the AI will generate the same imagery for all the names that we put in that particular e-mail list."

P7: "AI plays a vital role in every funnel of the customer journey, whether it is generating leads, nurturing leads, and also converting them. AI-generated content can help here because it comes with the essence of personalization. The more personalization is our approach, the easier for us to convert any lead. It is also possible to, turn the cold leads into warm leads with the help of personalized content where AI can play an important role."

GAI tools help to understand the customer demographics better and eventually lead the marketers to target the right audience with the right content. A content recommendation system or filtering system powered by GAI can offer a solution here. However, interview participants believe that there may be some technology coming where digital platforms will have multiple forms of content and show any specific content to a specific audience according to the customer profile to yield the best result at the lowest possible cost. This kind of personalization highlights the necessity of tailored communication.

P7: "I use AI tools that can generate image-based contents for different social media channels which usually took hours to resize it manually. Now I just mention the social media channel name and it does the job for me."

P1: "Until that need arises of talking with a human, everything else can almost be substituted with the AI and with these generative tools."

P3: "If you are planning to produce video content, you will have to allocate resources in a more robust manner. You will need a team, a big budget, and time. In a way when you are using AI, you can just describe it in a prompt and the video is ready in a few minutes."

GAI can redefine the level of personalization by automating the adaptivity in the content generation process. Content marketers can give prompts to GAI tools to generate certain content based on the adaptivity requirement of different digital channels like- different social media channels, search engine ads, display ads, or for promoting on the website. Based on the prompts, GAI tools can produce different

formats of the content simultaneously for different digital channels which previously took a great deal of human effort to produce different versions of content manually. Hence, content personalization is getting even narrowed down with the assistance of GAI.

GAI Ignites Content Creation Productivity

It has been explained in the literature section that all the technologies that were used in marketing were aimed at reducing costs and increasing productivity. GAI being an advanced technology is no different from that concept. Thus, this theme explains the degree of efficiency and productivity in marketing that can be achieved with the applications of GAI in DCM.

The first factor that ignites productivity is the automation of tasks that offers a reduced workload for the marketers. The study findings address that marketers are using and relying on GAI tools with the optimism of improving their working efficiency by reducing their workload.

> P3: It's also about efficiency when we are using AI tools to create content. Now, one of the main points is to make my task more efficient. Faster!"

> P4: "Actually, with AI-generated tools, we are able to create double or triple the amount of content that we used to do previously. Because it can create different variations at the same time. I can create content in German of my own without knowing the Arabic language using my tone and my own voice. Without AI, it would have been impossible because I have to learn German. But we can now do it in just a few minutes. So, definitely, it is a huge win for productivity and efficiency when it comes to content creation for a marketing person."

Repetitive tasks can be mostly taken care of by GAI tools in which much brainpower is not necessary. However, in the B2C context, the significance of GAI is higher in pushing productivity where most of the marketing work can be substituted or partially executed with AI tools. According to an interviewee, there is not much corporate assistance required in buying a pair of shoes where the content and product attributes do the job with the use of GAI. However, the B2B context relies on more relationships because of its interpersonal nature of communication. So, the findings justify the necessity of GAI applications in increasing content productivity is more important in the B2C context than B2B.

Moreover, GAI can foster the idea-generation process by breaking the creative block at the beginning of the content creation process which previously used to be a factor of stress for the marketers. In addition, marketers no longer need to send thousands of targeted emails that can be performed by GAI applications. GAI tools empower content marketers to generate a wide range of content with variations and volumes. One interviewee has shed light on marketing efficiency with three factors: production efficiency, personalization, and optimization. First, GAI can easily produce a range of content, including social media posts, blog

articles, and product descriptions quickly and efficiently. The marketers' role here is more of a proof-checker. And it is easy to tweak the content to test their usability. In comparison to human performance, GAI content creation is cheaper because of its ability to generate more content in less time.

P4: "Actually, with AI-generated tools, we are able to create double or triple the amount of content that we used to do previously. Because it can create different variations at the same time. I can create content in German of my own without knowing the Arabic language using my tone and my own voice. Without AI, it would have been impossible because I have to learn German. But we can now do it in just a few minutes. So, definitely, it is a huge win for productivity and efficiency when it comes to content creation for a marketing person."

P1: "As a marketing professional, AI benefits me at least personally. It has been like streamlining processes, reducing the workload, and helping to get over the creative block whenever it happens. For creators, AI can help create content and different versions fast. But then for the decision makers of course there is the statistics and analytics and all this data gathering and analysis which are beneficial."

So, according to the data, GAI is a productivity enhancer. Secondly, personalization has a strong influence too which has already been explained. GAI tools can analyze customer data and suggest what kind of content the different segments of the audience would like to experience. As personalized content is more engaging, this level of customization can drive more engagement and contribute to marketing efficiency. It has been previously impractical because the time and resources it required were not possibly supported by the firm. The third factor is optimization. As per the concern of SEO, GAI can help marketers optimize the content for search engines, increase visibility, and drive more traffic to the website. However, marketers need to play an active role in proofing where they can also use AI applications to suggest keywords, headings, and topics that can improve the search and rankings.

Another essential finding is that GAI may boost the overall marketing efficiency of the firm by limiting the need for technical expertise in certain domains. With good prompt generation skills, a junior content creator can create visual content, blogs, social media posts, videos, or targeted emails without having top-notch technical skills in image processing, video editing, or blog writing.

P2: "For example, I do not have a coding background, but because of artificial intelligence, I coded my first website. I have no idea what language I used, but I coded it with the help of AI."

However, this finding does not justify the replacement of the entire human force on the marketing team, but the need for expertise in certain functions will be reduced because the intensity of productivity will be increased, and the marketing tasks will be manageable with a relatively smaller team than the common standard. However, in terms of maintaining content quality and creativity, human content

creators are an essential part of proof checking, editing, or tuning the content given by GAI to achieve the best marketing output. All these factors contribute to streamlining the content creation efficiency for digital marketers.

4.3   GAI Facilitates Customer Loyalty

The objective of the marketing functions of a firm is to keep the customer connected with the brand and increase the customer's lifetime value. DCM is a key approach that can help customers with suitable content during entire phases of the journey. The inclusion of GAI in the DCM process can facilitate the customer journey better by identifying effective touchpoints, personalized communication, and ensuring real-time query response. This theme expresses how GAI can influence the customer experience with a firm through enhanced DCM efforts. Customer loyalty through GAI in this study is comprised of two sub-themes that focus on the customer experience & engagement with GAI and building long-term customer relationships.

GAI Enhances Customer Experience & Engagement

Though people's personal information is invaded in the digital space, applications of GAI can utilize that information to offer a seamless customer experience. This theme explains how customers can be better served with personalized content that is created with GAI.

Customer overall experience in the digital space depends on multiple factors including the influence of the brand rather than only the content. Findings from the analysis of interview data express that the ability of GAI to contribute to those factors combined can lead to better customer experience.

> P1: "AI can be a great way to enhance the customer experience and make the journey smoother. Interactions with customers through content have to be appropriate, not to annoy a customer. AI applications can be good in data mining and gathering the touchpoints and information, to give a good understanding of what your customer is looking for."

> P5: "There are some AI tools that give me suggestions for the best posting times. Also of course I get that data from the channels, for example, from Instagram, I get data when our followers are the most active."

Identification of the customers' accurate needs is one of those factors that is also connected to gathering customer insight. GAI applications can process the customer's digital footprints on the internet using cookies and track their journey. The major outcome of the customer's need understanding is the empowerment of marketers with the right type of content that can serve the right purpose for the

customer. Similarly, identifying the customer touchpoints across platforms guides the marketer in finding the right channel for communicating with the content to enhance customer experience. Touchpoints are the places where people encounter the content. It could be different digital platforms, websites, mobile applications, etc. GAI tools not only track the digital footprints but also can identify customers' preferred content mode. Moreover, GAI can generate different versions of content that create dynamicity in the content experience.

According to the findings, an essential factor contributing to the customer experience is the ability to serve or handle customer queries or problems in real-time.

> P3: "When I think about the customer experience, is mostly of how the company is responding to the complaints or how fast they are resolving problems with their product or services. And I think AI is associated with that."

> P1: "Determining where the level of good customer experience and good customer service has to be well thought otherwise, it can backfire and blow up in your face. And AI applications can provide good customer data that can help."

When it comes to customer service, it is mostly about dealing with customers with human agents. However, with the increased use of AI chatbots, many customers can now be served simultaneously. If not chatbots, GAI applications can help human agents with the right data, in a faster time to serve the customer at the right time. The ability to assist customers in a faster time is leading GAI to become a contributor to the improved customer experience. On the other hand, in the purchase journey, customer engagement plays a vital role in keeping the customers connected to a brand, and content marketing is a key tool for engagement here. One way of looking into customer engagement is faster reachability. An AI chatbot is a good example of ensuring ubiquitous reachability for customers and providing personal experience. AI can enhance the core competencies of any text, image, audio, or video-based content that triggers customers to engage with that content. Findings of this study found that digital content provides intrinsic motivation among customers to interact with firms' communication.

> P3: "I think it is content that leads towards the engagement. In my experience, I have seen pretty good content but they are not engaging. AI can enhance the core essence of the content with better visualization, catchy texts, or relevant information to catch the attention."

> P4: "I can make the journey smooth and enjoyable using AI tools. That's what it can do. That might give us leverage to some extent."

Content optimization is also mentioned as a tool to improve engagement with customers. For example, a single piece of content may require optimization and customization according to the different dealer or retailer location information, or different language for a business. With human manpower, it is a tedious process but with GAI it can be performed in a short time with minimum resources.

GAI Contributes to Long-term customer relationship

Customer loyalty is a relative term that depends on a variety of factors, which is one of the key findings from the interview data. GAI tools can assist in creating certain elements of the customer journey including communication and content generation, content personalization, optimization, data mining, and efficient customer service to impact the loyalty generation process. However, the product attributes and the brand image have a major influence on customer loyalty. This theme explains how GAI's influence in the content creation process leads to attaining long-term customer relationships for greater firm performance.

According to the interview data, GAI applications assist marketers in creating personalized content, identifying touchpoints, ensuring productivity, and assist to provide better customer experience which can greatly influence customer satisfaction, and building long-term relationships.

> P4: "There are some AI text-generating tools that with proper prompts give you different alternatives of authentic content. You can change the tone, you can change the language, you can even change the mood of the person speaking. So, these are something that you can personalize to the very core."

> P7: "Creative content is useful in maintaining the brand image of the firm in digital channels and GAI applications can leverage it."

But one key aspect here is the product or service attribute. Marketing professionals stress the importance of serving the right purpose of customers with attributes that are being offered. DCM mostly plays the role of bridging the customer with the attribute and reducing the gap between the parties. Brand image has a role in creating attachments for customers. GAI tools can facilitate a brand with unique branding initiatives by creative branding content, campaigns, and content to offer a memorable brand experience for the customers. Even social media activities can shape the image of the brand in customers' minds because a good number of branding activities are performed in digital channels now where GAI's role is relevant.

Customer retention is another factor that has an impact on marketing and business goals. The success of the business largely relies on retaining existing customers so that the business has a regular customer pool to buy the offered product or service. GAI can provide suitable retention strategies leveraging AI insights to identify customer satisfaction areas and provide the best experience with suitable content.

> P2: "AI can suggest me retargeting groups by analyzing their purchase journey, also help me to understand which group of customers need to be targeted with the loyalty program."

> P7: "Google ads can provide precise retargeting ad copies for remarketing using AI applications."

Moreover, the customer insights from GAI may lead the marketers to target the lost customers and retain them using personalized offers. The motive is to facilitate the customer journey and keep them connected through effect DCM process, and GAI is a strong contributor to strengthen long-term customer relationships.

5   Conclusions

This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the impacts of GAI on content marketing processes and outcomes while also investigating GAI's influence on the skills of content marketers. This chapter discusses the research result synthesizing the theory, thematic analysis, and findings from interview data to provide a comprehensive overview of GAI's role in DCM. Theoretical contribution and managerial implications of the study are discussed, and finally, future research agendas are prescribed.

5.1   Answers to the Research Questions

The empirical data shows that digital content marketing is a major driver in the overall marketing functions in the organizations and application of GAI is taking DCM to a new direction towards efficient and productive content marketing. It is expected that GAI will change all kinds of creative and knowledge work soon. However, scholars also revealed challenges related to GAI-based content in quality and intellectual property rights (Dwivedi et al., 2023). It is also stated that GAI may create a *hallucination effect* by presenting the data in a subtle and trustworthy manner without any validation behind it (Shen et al., 2023).

In search of the answers to the research questions of this study, findings from the thematic analysis have addressed some meaningful insights to shed light on it. RQ1 of the study aims to discover the influence of GAI in content marketing and the findings have portrayed it well along with the theoretical view. First, GAI in

marketing has been viewed as a performance enhancer (Kshetri et al., 2024), that may change the conventional content creation process (De Cremer et al., 2023). In comparison to the empirical research, the result of the study expresses that GAI will bring a drastic change in the content marketing field. The changes will come from several aspects including shifting the content creation process from human labor to AI-based tools, augmentation of content by AI tools with reduced dependency on design departments, identifying the right platform, and giving customer insight by scrutinized analysis. The factors that may lead marketers to choose GAI over humans are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Factors underlying for choosing GAI over human

Factor	Reason
Speed	Performing content creation process faster than human
Low-threshold error reduction	GAI can perform with minimal error, like- writing code with less human errors or writing a blog without grammatical errors
Avoid emotional biasness	GAI tools do not have emotional judgment, rather it just follows the prompt and show result based on algorithm
Cost effective	Can perform multiple tasks at the same time, no physical limitations like human, no performance loss over time
Utilizing unrelated skills	Offer unconventional skills to marketers in performing tasks that may require human expert on that subject matter
Idea generation	Eliminates creative block and saves time
Avoid tedious tasks	GAI is efficient option to perform time consuming tasks in the image or video content generation

In this study, it is evident that enhancing productivity and efficiency of the content marketing process is the major influence of GAI in DCM. Along with that generating customer insight and improving customer experience through GAI also serve as an influential purpose.

RQ2 concerns the effect of GAI on content marketers' roles. The study's results addressed that even if the industry moves towards a fully automated content creation trend, there will always be human actors and editors, to provide prompt and control the quality of the output (contents). Prompt generation is an important aspect here marketers might see a sizable growth in this role. Finally, GAI has been viewed as an assistive tool and it will become a common productivity tool in the future to amplify the content creation process where content marketers will play the role of moderator.

The last research question, RQ3 investigates the kinds of threats for content marketers with the inclusion of GAI in the marketing process. Although no previous research has shown evidence of how GAI can affect the skills of marketers, this study reveals that there is a risk of skill replacement in the future due to the wide use of GAI. Hardcore designing, copywriting, or coding skills might be replaced with effective prompt-generation skills. However, new skills related to the use of GAI might be added as DCM skills rather than graphics designing. Hence, the

replacement of human labor is on the way with the rapid application of GAI which will be backed by people with new or advanced skills in AI.

5.2   Theoretical Contribution

The results of the study provide three theoretical contributions to the DCM domain. First, the theoretical framework of Kshetri et al., (2024) has been examined following real-life content marketing scenarios based on a qualitative study in which seven interviewees from different industries reflected their perspective on the influence of GAI in the DCM. Moreover, each framework component was broken down and analyzed from different literature perspectives. This study confirms the theoretical propositions of Kshetri et al., (2024) that GAI is becoming a strong influence on the DCM through better customer insight, personalization of content, and improving efficiency in marketing activity for achieving overall marketing and organizational goals. This study also addressed the key consideration factors that may lead to the adoption of GAI for marketers which enriched the knowledge of GAI's influence in DCM. The trustworthiness of GAI is also examined from the marketers' perspective to add knowledge to this theory. GAI applications are increasing in content creation efficiency, and content marketers see it as a beneficial tool to enhance productivity. Similarly, the result of this study also addresses the first research proposition of Wahid et al. (2023) regarding the collaboration of GAI and humans in performing content creation tasks.

Secondly, this study identifies some extended use cases of GAI in marketing by complementing the use cases described by Kshetri et al., (2024), specifically in customer support, idea generation, video content making, and optimizing ads in search engine and social media platforms. These use cases are at the core of DCM operational processes and thus add knowledge to this subject matter. Also, some challenges of using GAI from a marketing and ethical perspective have been highlighted. The quality of content has been poised as the major challenge now because AI is not that advanced yet, while misinformation in the content also challenges creators to achieve faster content creation. This challenge creates the need for a content moderator role when integrating GAI into the content creation process. Customer data usage is another challenge in GAI-based content generation since AI learns from the data that threatens data privacy. Developing appropriate policies may guide marketers with the proper use of customer data in the content creation process with GAI and contributes to differentiating GAI-generated content from human-generated content for transparency. This contribution allows marketers to be prepared with appropriate measures while implementing the GAI-based content creation process.

Thirdly, this study extended the knowledge regarding the influence of GAI, reinforcing the thoughts on the risk factors for content marketers and their role in the emergence of GAI. Marketers do think that GAI is more of a productivity tool rather than a competitor, but it will also bring some replacement for the human workforce. However, it has also been mentioned that new job roles will be created because of specialized skills required for GAI, including prompt generation and output modification which complements another research proposition of Wahid et al., (2023). Findings of the study also confirm that GAI will bring a makeshift in the DCM landscape and its ability to perform tasks will increase rapidly soon.

5.3   Managerial Implications

The result of the study provides five implications for managers. This study focuses on the managerial perspectives of DCM management utilizing the latest GAI technological tools and the implications are useful for content creators, content marketers, marketing decision makers along with media and marketing communication agencies to work for B2B clients. First, the result testifies to the role and impact of GAI in the content marketing process and outcome. Findings from the research advise marketers on different kinds of tasks in content marketing that can be performed through GAI tools, the benefits & limitations of using GAI tools, and to develop a good understanding of the overall perception of GAI tools. Different types of GAI tools are mentioned for different formats (text, audio, video, image generation, coding) of content creation along with CRM, email marketing, customer support, and web ads. As a result, marketers will grasp which GAI tools are effective for which task.

Secondly, the result of the study provides the manager with an understanding of the degree of efficiency of content marketing with GAI tools. Though there was no direct calculative comparison of efficiency in the qualitative data, some relevant literature (McKinsey & Company, 2023; Salesforce, 2023) has highlighted how many working hours can be saved in DCM using GAI tools. So, it gives the marketing decision-makers some food for thought on the adoption, and usage of GAI tools in content marketing. Because efficient DCM may lead the organization to achieve marketing and organizational goals faster.

Thirdly, the findings of this study give a sense to content marketers regarding the reliability and intensity of using GAI tools in content creation. It is recommended for marketers to use GAI tools as assistive/productivity tools for content creation rather than using them for finished products. GAI tools are not yet advanced enough to provide a hundred percent perfect content without modification by humans. So, it is still lacking the quality side of creating content. But it can provide numerous variations of content in a short time. So, a collaborative approach of GAI and human

content creators would be the best match for now in DCM until further advancement of GAI.

The fourth implication for the managers from this study is the skills replacement of marketers in applying GAI. Managers now may understand the importance of prompt input and may focus on improving the prompt generation skills of the marketing team. Similarly, when recruiting new marketers, they might prioritize the prompt generation skills of potential candidates. However, some hardcore skills like graphic designing, copywriting, blog writing or video editing may fade away steadily soon because of the reliance on GAI tools to perform these tasks. But these skills are still valuable to have for a marketer so that the output modification system can remain smooth, and the chain of efficient content creation may remain concrete.

The final managerial implication of this study is the understanding of the changing landscape of DCM with the emergence of GAI. It is not a threat for marketers now, but it may become in the future if AI becomes more advanced to understand all the natural language and stimuli of human prompts and become able to offer sophisticated content. So, managers need to be prepared for this kind of dynamicity of the DCM industry in the future because of GAI's adoption.

5.4   Research Limitations

The result of the study needs to be approached considering its limitations. The trustworthiness of the qualitative study is examined through reliability and validity (Malhotra, 2008). Reliability indicates the transparency and justification of the research method (Rose & Johnson, 2020). It also encounters the question of whether the study can be reproduced. This study described the research objectives clearly through research questions and the collection, analysis, and presentation of research data and its results were conducted transparently and systematically maintaining the confidentiality of personal data. For instance, the names of the organizations and names of respondents were not disclosed to maintain confidentiality which put a limitation on transparency. Similarly, the results and analysis of qualitative data were also limited by the choice of researcher (Hair et al., 2015). Because of the nature of the qualitative study being context-specific, subjective, and not limited to any specific data analysis method, it reduces the generalizability of the result. Hence, the results of the study are limited to a certain data collection method, the rigor of the research depends on the researcher's knowledge and understanding to examine the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Validity, however, is the accuracy and authenticity of the results concerning the study's theoretical framework and research questions (Rose & Johnson, 2020). It focuses on the research that has been able to measure what it promised at the

beginning of the study. Validity in this study is maintained through choosing a relevant theoretical framework that represents the research agenda, careful use of high quality, relevant, contemporary journals to develop literature, and conducting quality semi-structured interviews aligning the research questions. Like other qualitative studies, the sample size of the interview (seven interviews) limits the generalizability of the findings (Adams et al., 2014). Moreover, data was gathered from two specific geographical locations though the interviewees have global operational experience. Interview participants were experienced professionals in the digital marketing field from small, medium, and large organizations having hands-on experience with GAI tools in content marketing. However, the use of GAI is a very recent phenomenon considering mass adoption thus the reflection on its usage may vary large even after one year. Thus, this study is among the early adopting research in the DCM field that may limit the applicability of its findings soon.

5.5   Future Research Agenda

Since the domain of GAI is relatively new in DCM, there are wide scopes to expand the research ideas surrounding the influence of GAI in content marketing processes and outcomes. This study investigated the influence of GAI on content marketing processes in a general term, but each aspect of the DCM process can be further examined to scrutinize the influence of GAI. The next research could be the effect of GAI on the replacement of human labor in the DCM field because the findings of this study shed a shallow light on this matter considering its early phase to examine such a topic now. From the managerial perspective, many areas of DCM can be examined by aligning GAI applications. Though this research has contributed to highlighting the efficiency of the content generation process with GAI, the quality spectrum of content needs further focus. It is still unclear how much quality content GAI can deliver and how much role a human editor plays in creating quality content. However, from the ethical perspective, it is important to study if GAI is using customer data without consent or copyright data without the copyright holder's permission, and how it can be controlled from a legislative perspective. Also, a study can be guided on how a differentiation can be drawn between GAI-generated content and human-generated content. One of the limitations of this study could be the lack of appropriate measures regarding the effectiveness of GAI-generated content. Hence, further study can focus on the effectiveness of human-generated content compared to GAI-generated content that can serve the marketers to make decisions on whether to choose one content generation method over another or use the collaborative method.

Though this research did not limit its study to one geographic location, it could be beneficial for the managers of any specific industry if several studies

focused on different industries to reveal how GAI can impact the content marketing culture of each industry or which industry is mostly influenced by it. Most of the digital contents are made to engage customers and is communicated through social media channels and search engines. So, from a marketers' point of view, research on which social media channels are most receptive to GAI content and GAI tools' role in search engine optimization (SEO) marketing to cater to web traffic and attain better search engine results for marketers. Similarly, the impact of GAI tools in sale lead generation across different industries will remain an important research topic in the future to identify where GAI-generated content or GAI applications are most suitable to offer the best result for marketers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Structure

Warm-up questions
- ➤ Could you please introduce yourself, mentioning your current role and work experience?
- ➤ What kind of industries have you worked with? Organizational background and industry structure.

GAI's influence on digital content marketing?

Q1. What is your opinion on GAI's role in today's marketing?

Q2. Do you think content creation is influenced by GAI nowadays? If yes, then how?

Q3. How do you think the personalization of content is influenced with the adoption of GAI?

Q4. Is there any role of GAI in enhancing customer experience through AI-generated content creation?

Q5. What is your opinion on the influence of GAI-enabled content on customer engagement?

GAI's role in digital content marketing productivity?

Q6. Is there any contribution of GAI tools in generating customer insights, other than content creation?

Q7. Do you think GAI-enabled content can acquire quality sales leads?

Q8. How do you define the adoption of GAI in the content creation process in contributing to marketing efficiency?

Q9. Is there any influence of GAI-enabled content to drive customer loyalty and satisfaction?

GAI's effect on the role of content creators

Q10. Who do you think are the key beneficiaries of GAI in marketing, if any? Content creators, marketing decision makers, customers etc.

Q11. Is there any role of GAI in affecting the skills of content creators? Adding new skills or eliminating the need of necessary skills.

Q12. Is there any role of GAI in affecting the quality of content?

Q13. What do you prefer in creating your content, in-house creator, trusted professional organization (agency), or skillful self-employed creator?

Any possible threat from GAI for content creators/content marketers in the future

Q14. What comes to your mind when you hear GAI will replace content makers?

Q15. How do you view GAI from a content marketer perspective, just a tool for content creation or a competitor?

Q16. What factors are considered in choosing GAI tools for creating content over human skills?

Q17. What are the reasons that may cause a makeshift into the content creation industry with wider use of GAI?

Closing question

Is there anything else that you think is relevant and can contribute to this research, but we have missed in the discussion?

Appendix 2: Explanation of Codes

1. Latest Technology – A new technology to the DCM arena that can assist marketers with new possibilities.

2. Drastic Change – A big shift in technological terms to significantly change the working process.

3. Assistive Tool – A tool that can help marketers in executing daily tasks and share their workloads.

4. Task Automation – The systematic self-sufficient process to execute the task by the technology system itself based on a given command.

5. Hype – A temporary extravagant discussion and adoption of AI tools.

6. Double-edged Sword – GAI is now such a tool that has some major limitations along with some groundbreaking innovations.

7. Deceptive approach to customer – GAI uses some applications that provide a gesture of human-driven communication while it does not.

8. Homogeneous Output – Providing similar results to different users that lack uniqueness.

9. Creative & Versatile – GAI is smart enough to provide a blend of creative ideas with a lot of variations and in different formats.

10. Amplifying Content – Improving or increasing the raw essence of the content with creative addition or visualization.

11. Human Moderator – A human controller who runs the whole content creation process with GAI.

12. Content Modification – Editing, changing, or improving the GAI-generated content to get the desired finished content.

13. Data-driven Decision – Make marketing decisions based on the customer and market data.

14. Buyer Persona – Creating the personal characteristics of a buyer based on the data to create an avatar of the customer.

15. Content Strategy – The plan towards creating suitable digital content to achieve the marketing and business goals of firms.

16. User Specific & Dynamic Content – Offer digital content matching the user-specific needs and in a dynamic manner with variations.

17. Tailored Communication – Personalizing the communication according to the needs of the customers or serving personal needs when looking for a solution.

18. Adaptive to different Channels – Contents that are made to adapt to the required formats, sizes, or shapes of different digital channels.

19. Automated Content Creation – The ability of GAI to produce content all by itself, using its own data & resources based on the given command.

20. Speedy Delivery – Gai's ability to generate the content faster than human designers.

21. Low cost & Large volume of content – The cost of generating a single piece of content with GAI is lower than human-generated content and GAI can generate multiple contents at the same time.

22. No Technical Expertise requires – It is not essential to know coding, graphic designing, or blog writing to generate content using GAI.

23. Content Delivery in effective touchpoints – Identifying where the most target consumers are (digital channels) and delivering the content to effective places to generate desired results.

24. Faster Response to customer problem - The ability of GAI to address customer issues in the least amount of time.

25. Personalized Experience – Personalized content based on the buyer persona offers a personalized experience.

26. Satisfaction with Optimized content – Customers feel more welcome when the content they see matches their needs.

27. Personalized Interaction – GAI's ability to communicate personally with queries using chatbots.

28. Memorable brand experience – Creative visuals, faster response to queries, and reaching at the right moment can create a favorable brand positioning.

29. Retention Strategies – Content marketing plan in keeping existing customers with the brand for a longer time and getting back the lost customers.