Exploring ageing consumers' usage of content marketing, content typology and online brand advocacy

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Abstract

Purpose – Given the importance of the growing segmentation of ageing consumers and their increasing interaction with the Internet, digital marketing scholars are becoming more interested in this market. Prior research needs to pay more attention to this market in many contexts of digital marketing. This study aims to provide insights into ageing consumers' content usage, content typology choices, and online brand advocacy (OBA).

Design/methodology/approach – Semi-structured interviews were applied, and 16 consumers from Southern Europe aged 55+ were included. The interviews were transcribed and examined following the principles of content analysis.

Findings – According to the research, older consumers display their usage and concerns regarding online content. They have different decision-making processes depending on whether they are purchasing products or services. Likewise, their choices of content typology vary based on the utilitarian or hedonic product category.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the literature by providing insights into this growing segmentation and proposing an OBA framework for older consumers related to content marketing. Finally, the study suggests that older consumers are passive online and active offline brand advocates.

Keywords Older consumer, Content marketing, Content usage, Content typology, Online brand advocacy, OBA

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the world faces a vast population ageing phenomenon. The decline in fertility and increasing longevity are causing the rise of older populations, including Europe (Bloom and Luca, 2016). This phenomenon transforms the nature of the consumer market and enables new opportunities for many industries and marketers. So, the older population can be considered a company's attractive growing segment, which is increasingly engaged on the Internet and offers crucial potential for digital marketers (Bui, 2022).

In the literature review, these older Internet users aged 50+ are denominated as silver surfers (Bitterman and Shalev, 2016), a demographic group with considerable pension income and more time after retirement. Besides the vast importance of this age group, the previous literature review focused on younger adults, who have the highest share of online users and shoppers, focussing less on older consumers' online behaviours and habits (Lian and Yen, 2014). Propelled by the shifting consumer habits during the COVID-19 pandemic, older consumers have increased their Internet usage and content marketing consumption, which is considered a digital tool for fostering user-generated content (Du Plessis, 2015).

Online brand advocacy (OBA) was often described as brand advocating that occurs in an online environment (Wallace *et al.*, 2012), as a form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010), or as a form of consumer–brand engagement (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). Previous research highlighted that content can motivate customers to buy products or services, turn them into loyal customers, and even have them spread the messages to others (Kee and Yazdanifard, 2015). A prior study argued that brand-related content leads to engagement (Schivinski *et al.*, 2016) and positively affects consumer behaviours (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). Besides, research foresees the potential of online brand advocacy (OBA) since it is the highest level of digital consumer engagement (Gavilanes *et al.*, 2018) and represents the brand's recommendations, support and loyalty of consumers (Machado *et al.*, 2014). Nevertheless, online brand advocacy (OBA) concepts are unclear and too general (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). Moreover, OBA was neglected concerning ageing consumers, and a few recent studies have included it (Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024a).

So, this investigation argues that as online brand advocacy is motivated by consumers who strongly engage with the brand, applying it as a content marketing tactic is suitable. Previous studies have explored content marketing and brand advocacy as unrelated topics. So, a gap exists in understanding and how they are related. The need for further research on content marketing and online brand advocacy (OBA) has its potential with the unexplored older consumer target.

This study attempted to fill this gap by providing further insights into content marketing usage, typology choices, and online brand advocacy regarding ageing consumers. Accordingly, this study attempts to answer the following research questions: *(RQ1) What are older consumers' online activities and OBA behaviours? (RQ2) What are the preferred online content typologies of the older consumer? And why?* To answer these questions, a qualitative study was carried out to provide a deep understanding of older consumer's perspectives and behaviours through a qualitative method approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with southern European ageing consumers.

This research answers the prior call for more research in OBA (Wilk *et al.*, 2020) and the urgency of a deep understanding of OBA from the older consumers' perspective (Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024a). To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first research addressing (1) comprehensive older consumers' content usage, (2) their choices of content typology and (3) their online brand advocacy behaviours. The paper is organised as follows. The next section reviews the relevant literature and then discusses the research methodology. Sections 4 and 5 present and discuss the results of the study. The paper concludes with theoretical and managerial implications, current research limitations, and future research direction.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Content marketing and its typology

Over the past decade, content marketing has become increasingly popular and one of the most extensively employed digital marketing strategies (Barbosa *et al.*, 2023). Content marketing is creating relevant, entertaining, and valuable content that does not involve direct

selling but can help retain and acquire customers (Holliman and Rowley, 2014). It is the process of producing and distributing useful content, particularly online. Content is developed to be valuable to consumers, who consume it willingly for their benefit. The most recent study (Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024b) argued that the commonly used theories mentioned in content marketing research include cultural convergence theory, use and gratification, and stimulus-organism-response theory.

Furthermore, the media and journalism industries are the main focus of the field. The study also noted that only a few constructs were explored regarding brand-related outcomes, with brand engagement being the most common dependent variable. It indicates that additional research is needed into other constructs of interest in different contexts. Both academics and practitioners agree that content marketing relies on a consumer-centric strategy (Ho *et al.*, 2020). However, it is a mistake for content strategies to jump right into creation and distribution without initially concentrating on pre-production, similar to how it is for any digital marketing strategy (Bowden and Mirzaei, 2020). The ability to connect with actual customers and provide them with pertinent values through the content will decide the success of digital content marketing. While extensive content marketing research exists, just a few studies have focused on content typology.

Content typologies are among the least understood yet one of the most important ones that marketers must define before creating and delivering it. Content typology is generally multidimensional and conceptual. Based on prior studies, content typology can be referred to as content types (Coelho *et al.*, 2016; Vargo, 2016) and formats (Sabate *et al.*, 2014), where some researchers explored both (Kim *et al.*, 2015; Rauschnabel *et al.*, 2012; Shahbaznezhad *et al.*, 2021). Earlier studies stated that content types impact the number of likes and comments, along with formats of content that finally lead to engagement (Chauhan and Pillai, 2013; Sabate *et al.*, 2014). Compatible with the more recent ones mentioning that content types also affect the share intention (Fu *et al.*, 2017), click intention (Kim *et al.*, 2021), consumer engagement (Vlachvei *et al.*, 2022), and stakeholder engagement (Denktaş-Şakar and Sürücü, 2020; Mehmood *et al.*, 2023; Surucu-Balci *et al.*, 2020). The previous literature investigated content typology by focussing on different industries, such as fake news (Molina *et al.*, 2021), female breast cancer (Biancovilli *et al.*, 2021), wine (Vlachvei *et al.*, 2022), B2B (Meire *et al.*, 2022), and football (Doyle *et al.*, 2022), among others.

Nevertheless, the content typology choice of consumers can be different based on different product types. Thus, the perspective of utilitarian and hedonic should be considered, in which hedonic goods refer to experiential consumption, whereas utilitarian goods are primarily functional (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000). Regarding motivation, hedonic products are associated with fun, excitement, sensory consumption goals, and emotional drives, whereas utilitarian products are associated with functional and rational goals (Botti and Mcgill, 2011; Kronrod and Danziger, 2013). Remarkably, little research (Amatulli *et al.*, 2020; Deb and Lomo-David, 2020) attempts to apply utilitarian and hedonic concepts to content marketing. Instead of focussing on one particular industry, the current study will explore content marketing with a specific segment in mind: older consumers.

2.2 Older consumers and their content usage

Older consumer segmentation group, referred to in the literature as the "grey market", "digital immigrants" or "silver surfers" (Bitterman and Shalev, 2016; Morrison, 2015), grew up without the Internet and faced the rapid development of new technologies in their lives (Fietkiewicz, 2017). However, Internet adoption and usage among older consumers have steadily increased over time (Hunsaker and Hargittai, 2018). Many elders have embraced the Internet revolution and opposed the stereotypes of older people as unable to adapt to technological changes (Choudrie *et al.*, 2013). Even though they lack computer skills and

online searching, as they have trouble defining search terms and distinguishing complicated layouts or interfaces, they still get online daily (Morrison, 2015). Carpenter and Yoon (2015) claimed that because they rely more on cognitive characteristics, they are experienced consumers who protect their decision-making quality and can better absorb information systematically under specific scenarios. Academics and practitioners recognise the significance and heterogeneity of this market, examining processing, behaviour, and decision-making within this segment (Yannopoulou *et al.*, 2023).

The past research studied older adults' online activities and found that they searched for information, news, personal development, commercial transactions, leisure, social interaction, and gaming (van Deursen and van Dijk, 2014). Not only Internet usage but even having accounts on social media sites, including Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter (Fietkiewicz, 2017). The more recent research (Hunsaker and Hargittai, 2018; Nunan and Di Domenico, 2019) updated their online activities by using social media sites, emailing, general information searching, product research and health information seeking. Especially to escape social isolation and improve social well-being during the COVID-19 epidemic, older consumers boosted their use of online shopping (Toska *et al.*, 2023) and social networking (Wilson-Nash *et al.*, 2023). With the increasing online activity of older consumers, content marketing might be beneficial for marketers as a tool to reach this potential group. Hence, it is essential to investigate older consumers' content marketing usage. The literature review identifies gaps regarding the insights of older consumers on content marketing, including the typology, as they know they can choose what information to receive, in what format and whether to believe the content (Kee and Yazdanifard, 2015).

Only a few studies (Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024a; Stürmer and Einwiller, 2023) have investigated content marketing related to ageing consumers. For example, Bubphapant and Brandão (2024a) explored older consumers' online community, classifying content categories and identifying their main motivations as affective- and nostalgic-oriented. In contrast to previous findings, older customers were more likely to be persuaded by informative rather than emotional appeals (Teichert *et al.*, 2018). Stürmer and Einwiller (2023) also studied perspectives and reactions to different types of content marketing in different consumer age groups, including older consumers. The research found that older consumers tended to be more sceptical and critical towards content marketing than younger consumers. While the field has acknowledged that firms need to provide different marketing communication strategies for this segment since they behave differently (Yannopoulou *et al.*, 2023), comprehension of their usage of marketing content is still limited.

2.3 Online brand advocacy (OBA)

Online brand advocacy (OBA) is brand advocacy that occurs online (Wilk *et al.*, 2018). Brand advocacy is the consumer's intention to actively recommend and support the brand. It also includes the intention to try new products, spread positive word-of-mouth (WOM), be resilient, and forgive negative wrongdoings (Pai *et al.*, 2015). In the online context, many constructs have been used to measure online brand advocacy, prompting some academics to suggest that OBA is distinct from offline brand advocacy (Wilk *et al.*, 2018). For example, previous studies have been using electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Chu and Kim, 2011), online recommendations (Fagerstrøm and Ghinea, 2011), "Like" and "Follow" brand online (Smith *et al.*, 2012; Wallace *et al.*, 2012), user-generated content (Cheong and Morrison, 2008), consumer–brand engagement online (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014).

While brand advocacy can occur offline and online, OBA has recently begun to be examined (Wilk *et al.*, 2018, 2020, 2021a, b). Wilk *et al.* (2021b) have argued that online brand advocacy is an elaborate construct related to offline brand advocacy with specific online communication characteristics given by consumers with direct brand experience. The study

suggested four dimensions of online brand advocacy: brand knowledge, brand defence, brand positivity, and positive virtual visual cues, as seen in Figure 1.

Brand knowledge refers to providing insightful brand information by experienced consumers, while brand defence involves speaking on behalf of a brand in a way that reflects brand-protective behaviour. Brand positivity involves positive communication about a brand and endorsement of that brand. Lastly, the positive virtual visual cue is virtual visual manifestations that support a brand and visual online expressions indicating positive feelings about a brand (Wilk *et al.*, 2020).
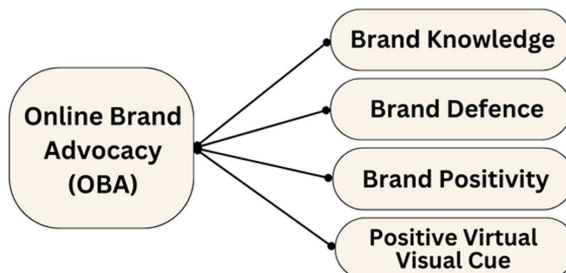
Recently, the notion of OBA has been explored in many contexts, including sustainable branding (Abdelrazek and El-Bassiouny, 2022), luxury branding (Wong, 2023), and online destination brand advocacy (ODBA) (Wilk *et al.*, 2021a). The researchers contended that all three variables of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control positively related to consumers' advocacy intentions (Abdelrazek and El-Bassiouny, 2022). The evidence also suggests that OBA and content marketing are two related constructs. Aljarah *et al.* (2022) conducted a study comparing user-generated content (UGC) with firm-generated content (FGC), finding that UGC is a more significant predictor of OBA and consumer engagement. This is aligned with the study of Bubphapant and Brandão (2024a), stating that content marketing can predict OBA through high engagement. Not only can content marketing allow marketers to build consumer–brand relationships, but it can also facilitate engagement, which can lead to OBA. Hence, understanding the insights into OBA behaviours is crucial.

To comprehend OBA from the perspective of older consumers, it may be necessary first to identify their OBA behaviours. Even though several studies have looked into brand advocacy, more research is needed on how it occurs online and relates to older consumers. This study will expand research on OBA, an under-researched field, and employ Wilk *et al.* (2020) dimensions. These four dimensions convey both the uniqueness and complexity of consumer-related online conversations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Qualitative approach

A qualitative approach was applied to address the research questions of the present study: *(RQ1) What are older consumers' online activities and OBA behaviours? (RQ2) What are the preferred online content typologies of the older consumer? And why?* The data used in this study were gathered through semi-structured interviews, which aimed to discover participants' perspectives regarding the experiences relating to the research topic (McIntosh and Morse, 2015). The interviews are widely used in qualitative research because they offer a rich source of data and take place face-to-face, online or by phone

Source(s): Authors's own work, developed from Wilk *et al.* (2020)

(Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Indeed, qualitative methods are intended to collect rich and thorough data on real-world experiences, investigate human behaviour and new phenomena, and develop or update existing theories. The semi-structured interviews were applied to explore older consumers' behaviours, and they are especially beneficial in an exploratory phase since they allow for flexibility in question presentation while also making participants feel comfortable (Boussema, 2023). For this reason, using qualitative methods with semi-structured interviews has proved relevant in this study. This qualitative method adds to our understanding of this phenomenon by combining existing knowledge with the stories and experiences of older consumers who are active online.

3.2 Data collection

Thematic interviews covered four broad themes, including more detailed questions about older people's online behaviours, their views on content marketing, online engagement, and online brand advocacy behaviours. The interview employed a blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by "why" or "how" questions (Adams, 2015). The interview guide outlined the main topics and the questions to be addressed based on literature reviews (see Appendix). The interview guide was pilot-tested with two older consumers and then adjusted based on feedback regarding the order of the questions, the issues to add/delete, and the wording in the questions. The interviews were private to ensure they would not be interrupted and to establish a comfortable atmosphere for participants. Individual interviews were favoured over focus groups to emphasise individual stories and explore their experiences more thoroughly. Moreover, the semi-structured interview with one respondent at a time is appropriate for the study because participants' use of online content may be personal or sensitive. The interviews were conducted in-person and online using a virtual channel, namely Zoom video.

All the interviews took place in Portugal, the fourth European country with 22% of the population aged 65 and above (United Nations, 2019). Besides, Europe placed second in the penetration of Internet users worldwide, trailing only North America (InternetWorldStats, 2021), demonstrating the relevance of the context in this study. The participants were first informed about the scope of the research and then requested to state a consent statement and provide permission to be audio-recorded. The confidentiality of acquired data, which will only be utilised in this research context, was addressed. The interviews with the first author were conducted between 2021 and 2022 and lasted between 30 and 90 min. On average, the interview lasted 53.12 min.

According to the literature above, the study explored content typology in content format and type. The participants were given examples of content types and formats since they might be unfamiliar with the concept. The study also took into account utilitarian and hedonic perspectives. Two distinct products were chosen to represent the utilitarian and hedonic categories. A Portuguese water brand represented a utilitarian good, whereas a Portuguese hotel represented a hedonic one. The study then developed controlled examples of those two products collected from social media sites and presented them to participants, who were asked for their preferences and opinions. Consequently, the content format was comprised of video, article, photo, and motion video. At the same time, content types included promotional content, product attributes, product benefits, engagement content, relational service (customer service), and organisational content (corporate social responsibility).

3.3 Research participants

Interview recruitment was done according to the following criteria: Portuguese consumers older than 55, daily Internet usage, English speaking, and both genders represented. The sample consisted of 16 older consumers from Portugal (I01-I16), eight males and eight

females, to ensure gender balance, which could be a critical factor in shaping and influencing data (Herod, 1993). Four were aged 55 to 59, three were 60–64, seven were 65–69, and two were 70–74. The average age of participants was 65 years. The sampling methods applied in this research began with convenience sampling, which was easily accessible and willing to participate (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). The research then used snowball sampling, in which the initial sample referred others to access difficult-to-reach people and expanded like a snowball expanding in size (Heckathorn, 2011).

This current study collected data until it reached a saturation point where little or no new insights or themes emerged from the interviews (Boddy, 2016; Guest *et al.*, 2020; Sebele-Mpofu, 2020) to ensure adequate data collection and sample size. Sample size in qualitative research has been the topic of long-standing discussions. Advocating for similar flexibility and transparency as quantitative research in obtaining and reporting on thematic saturation has grown. Researchers pointed out that finding the saturation point is challenging because they only have information on what they have found (Tran *et al.*, 2017). For the inductive analysis of qualitative interviews, 6–7 interviews will typically capture most themes in a homogeneous sample, with six interviews required to achieve 80% saturation. Furthermore, 11–12 interviews might be needed to reach a higher saturation level (Guest *et al.*, 2020). This is echoed by the recent study arguing that saturation can be reached in a narrow range of 9–17 interviews, particularly in studies with homogeneous populations and narrowly defined objectives (Hennink and Kaiser, 2022).

3.4 Data analysis
All interviews were audio-recorded, audio files were transcribed to text, and transcripts were transcribed into Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDA) software, Nvivo 12. Semi-structured interviews aim to determine samples' perspectives to confirm, correct, or discover new knowledge (McIntosh and Morse, 2015). Thus, content analysis was applied to sort and summarise the content of the data. The coding and interpretation of interviews were carried out in two rounds. Table 1 sets out the axial codes derived from the data, including the keywords and expressions of each dimension.

First, researchers processed transcribed data manually and abductively formed open coding. The abductive research method encourages a thorough investigation of data. It also promotes intriguing findings in consumer research when consumer behaviour does not conform to existing theories (Janiszewski and van Osselaer, 2022). This study adopted an abductive data analysis, engaging with empirical data and extant theoretical understanding. This abductive research design is an effective tool for gathering rich understanding from participant narratives while ensuring findings have theoretical generalisability (Thompson, 2022). After, the observed patterns were then evaluated to determine the final codes. The links between the discussed themes were also examined, such as source credibility, offline advocacy, as well as the different content usages shared by interviewed older consumers.

4. Research findings
The main findings are summarised into three main topics, following the research questions of this study: the content usage of older consumers, the content typology choices and OBA behaviours. The topics are covered to explain and contribute to a better understanding of older consumers and the importance of content marketing in online brand advocacy.

4.1 Older consumers and their content usage
The findings suggested that participants' online activities were similar: reading news, emailing, searching for information on their interests, searching for information on products

Older consumers' content marketing dimensions and sub-dimensions	Keywords and expressions
Existing dimensions	
Online brand advocacy	
Brand knowledge	Familiar, know, experience, information
Brand defence	Preference, conservative, experience, loyal, claim, bias, complaint, defending
Brand positivity	Recommendation, opinion, like, best, quality, fan
Positive virtual visual cue	Like, emoji, comment
Emerging dimensions	
Older consumers' content usage	
Professional activities	Contact, business, news, work, email, job
Social activities	Message, friends, family, social media
Leisure activities	Trip, travel, information, music, recipe
Consumer activities	Payment, offers, comparing price
Buying online	Searching, promotion, online service, flights, tickets, cheaper, hotels, sites
Buying offline	Physical, store, touch, feel, local, material, quality
Intrusive of online content	Intrusive, subscribing, advertisement, newsletter, necessary, annoying, delete, spam
Offline advocacy	In-person, friend, family, private, colleague
Source Credibility	
User-generated content	Comparing, forum, tutorial, opinion, comment, influencing, review, users, other consumers
Officials/institutions	Original, confident, company, trustable, reliable, official information
Payment security issue	Fear, Paypal, problems, trust, security, afraid, transaction, payment, credit card

Table 1.
Axial coding scheme

Source(s): Authors' own work

and services, online transactions, and social networking. All participants accessed the Internet daily; some said they were always connected. Their online activities can be categorised into four main activities, summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 shows the online activities of participants related to professional activities in which they read the news, emails, and search data for work purposes. The social activities involved online conversation and social media. The leisure activities involved recreation searching, whereas the consumer activities related to searching for products and services, e-payment, and online shopping. Most participants described themselves as being information seekers rather than buyers or consumerists. Their online search revealed various products or service categories, such as technology, agriculture, clothes, travelling, culture-related, medicines and supplements, renewal energy, home decorations, literature, and arts.

The finding also reported less social media usage in this elder group. The social media sites they have included Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Spotify, and YouTube, with Facebook and WhatsApp being the most common. Most of the participants have social media accounts but are not constantly active. They found that social media creates narcissism and does not reflect the reality of life. They also found it offers too much information and advertising, making them tired. For examples,

What I normally check is, for example, I was looking for a smartwatch and the next weeks, my Facebook was completely full of this advertisement. I already click by mistake on one, and I have to

Theme	Represented quotes
Professional activities	*"Basically, because I am, perhaps I am a news addict because my business is on the news, the financial businesses are on the news. What is going on right now, and what will be the impact on my investment? (. . .) I usually use the newspaper Publico, mainly online. I am a subscriber. I also use others like the Diário de Notícias, Sapo and not more than that." (I04)*
	"I also use the Internet to give my lessons online at the time we say at home. And you have to give lessons; we use some platforms like Teams." (I06)
	"Well, I use the Internet very much for emails. I would say this is my primary reason for using the Internet. Also, for a search for information using Google or other engines for search." (I13)
Social activities	*"Message from friends, using WhatsApp. Yes, because I have many messages from my friends and so on." (I03)*
	"I also use WhatsApp as you may, as you can see, to keep in touch with my sons and their family and friends." (I08)
	". . .And when someone talks to me about something that I do not know very well, I am not sure about it. I look for information on Google because it is easier than in another way. So, I use Google a lot of time." (I07)
Leisure activities	*"As I had told you that, I am retired now. So, for example, say I want to go on a trip to travel somewhere, and I want to know more about the place I am going to visit. Then I look for information about this." (I02)*
	"So, the bulk of my activity on the Internet is not related to shopping; it is related to ideas, with access to culture, access to ideas, to news, opinion, economics, politics, religion also, and culture." (I12)
	"One of the things I like to do in my free time is crosswords. And so, I read the newspapers, and they usually have a puzzle of crosswords. And I do it, and when I have some doubts, I will search in Google for the information." (I07)
	"I am studying music. That is the project I try to develop after my retirement because I had a low formation in music, and so I often go to some apps and some websites where I can do some exercises in music." (I15)
Consumer activities	*"I must have that Internet connection. But not only for studying, also related to a bank to make some payments for several things, for example, paying for the studies at my son's university. I use the bank to pay, and my university is paid by PayPal." (I01)*
	"I would look for hotels online or for restaurants. Being retired, I have plenty of time and some money. I can afford that." (I08)
	"I also use the Internet a lot for our private life to buy online, to check what products are available. I also do all the payments online" (I09)

Source(s): Authors' own work

pay. And then I returned back the call, and they stopped the payment. I think that that is a tricky thing over there in Facebook, in the way. (I01)

For example, an advert for a product. Then the Facebook asked me what was wrong with that advert? I usually said it is irrelevant. And then I choose the option I do not want to see that advert again, something like that, because there is something that really annoys me. I use less Facebook than before because they are always bombarding you. And I hate that. (I08)

Another reason is that Instagram annoys me even more than Facebook in a particular point of view, which is this tendency that people have to display a bright life, a brilliant life full of excellent experiences, nice holidays, and nice dinners. (. . .) And I really get upset about that, even though very often I see pictures and news, which, you know, are delightful about some people that I know, that actually is very miserable at that precise time in their lives. But then, on the social network, they seem, you know, that they are living the life of a princess or a prince. And so, I think that Instagram is more prone to fake ideas. (I12)

When mentioning online content, 10 participants considered it very useful, but to some extent, they felt it was unreliable and questioned its trustworthiness. Moreover, they also mentioned the sources of that information. As some examples,

> It is unavoidable and online for me; it is difficult to answer that question because I think online is the same as life. Life is very good, and it is horrible. The same with online content and online safety. You need to know where you go and how far you expose yourself, and you are never totally safe. (I09)

> In some cases, yes, it is trustable. In some other cases, no. They are saying things that are not real. Another simple example, I bought some small points for this pen, and when they came, they crashed. So, they have information, and they put an image from a real, original one, and they send me a very bad sample. (I01)

> I do not know, not Sure. If we can trust the quality of the product? (. . .) So, there is something that we are always, you know, not secure of it, makes me go back, I think more than two times, is it trustful or not? (. . .) Nowadays, there are so many technologies, and they are so capable of doing so many things. When you are on the website, and you are looking at the advertisement (. . .), It makes you feel attractive, but at the same time, you are asking it in your mind, is this real? (I11)

They also mentioned the source credibility of the content where they agreed that both user-generated content from the consumers and official company/institutionally supported content were the sources of content they trust and influence their decisions;

> For example, that I was telling the original information. So, it feels confident about the information. So, I followed that. In some other cases, if it is from the original company, I know that it is trustable information. (I01)

> And these, I consider that one of the most important things of the internet that makes the internet quite democratic. So, you get a lot of information that is produced not only by the companies but also by the customers and other users. (I13)

With the focus on consumer activities, when talking about products or services they were searching online, mainly using Google and official websites, the findings showed that their intentions of searching were different, depending on the types of products. For products like clothes or shoes, 14 participants used the Internet primarily to search product content, compare prices, and make their choices. However, they preferred to complete the process by buying products offline/physically. The reasons were that they needed to ensure the products by themselves and did not want to be involved in returning products or refunding the money. For examples,

> . . . And to try and see if it fits. If the size is adequate, if the material feels well, even the composition, (. . .) And I think this is a big contrast with the younger generation because my daughters they shop a lot online, and then they have no problem in receiving and then returning. And I say, well, that is, I really, from my point of view, that is a waste of time, complete waste of time. (I12)

> I like to wear these to see if they fit me well or not. I prefer to go to normal shops and to buy directly. I know that if you do not feel comfortable, you can get checked and returned, but I do not like it very much. Even for books, I like to go to the shops and open them and take a look before buying them. (I14)

> I like to see, to touch the product. Okay, I am from this generation, you know, for me, we can see, but it is not the same thing. I can see the things on the Internet. I can have an idea of how it looks, but to buy, I frequently go to the shops, not online. Only to see and check the price, compared to the price, for example. But, normally, it is the traditional way to buy products. (I16)

On the other hand, they searched for information and completed transactions online for services such as accommodations, flights, concert tickets, and exhibitions. However, despite

their experiences of online shopping, half of the participants revealed their concerns about payment security issues and even had bad experiences before;

> We could have problems, but mainly because I do not want to let others know my own accounts on the internet. I do not want to buy anything. I do not trust that. I do not trust. So, it is like you put your life in the hands of others. (I03)
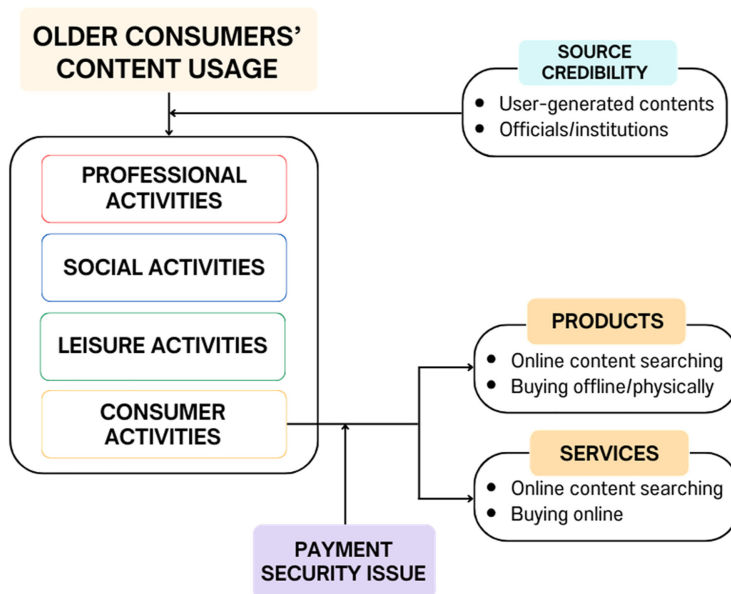
> Because there were already five or six times, someone took money from my accounts. Yes. Sometimes, it was to buy things or to play in the casino. And twice, it was, they took the money from my account through MBway. (I07)

Payment security and source credibility of contents are considered factors that can affect older consumers' decision-making process. The overall findings of older consumers' content usage are presented in Figure 2.

In Figure 2, the four main online activities are presented. With the focus on consumer activities involving product or service searching, e-payment and online shopping, the findings also included the intention of content searching, the process of acquiring products, and their concerns regarding source credibility and payment security issues. It is noteworthy to conclude that for products, they preferred to search for information, compare the price, and then make the final choice and transaction offline/in-store. Meanwhile, for services, older people were more likely to make the decision and complete all the processes online.

4.2 Content typology choice: utilitarian VS hedonic
Following the thematic interview guide, the interviewer presented all participants with examples of different content typologies of two represented product types: utilitarian (water) and hedonic (hotel). The participants carefully examined each example and voiced their choices and opinions.

Source(s): Authors' own work

Figure 2.
Findings of older consumers' content usage

For content format, the findings suggested that participants preferred motion video for the utilitarian product type, with pictures and moving motion without sound. While the video was good, it took too much time for them. For the hedonic product type, most participants revealed that a picture was essential when searching for hotels, followed by a video, with slight differences. The summary of findings on content typology choice with the represented quotes is presented in Table 3.

The participants' choices of content type are presented following the content format. Older consumers preferred product attributes as the content type for utilitarian products. Like utilitarian products, older consumers also preferred product attributes content for the hedonic product type. They also preferred promotion content as the second choice of content type. Interestingly, when mentioning the engagement type of content the brands asked consumers to join or participate in, such as sharing photos, voting, or playing games, all participants revealed they had never done it. In corporate social responsibility-related content, the participants expressed different opinions on the issue, as seen below:

> I think they want to pass the image that they are very concerned about the environment. I think it is publicity. (I14)

Content typology	Product category	Main themes	Represented quotes
Content format	Utilitarian	Motion Video	*"In this case, because I know the product. So, I prefer this one, for example. Okay, because the video takes too much time, and I do not want to lose time because it is a lot of time for me." (I01)*
			"I think it is very well designed, and it uses motion, but with the shape of the bottle with a label and then a very simple message. I think it is great." (I12)
	Hedonic	Picture, Video	*"What I normally do when I look for the hotel is to see the pictures more than video. I like the photos because if I see them, if I am watching a hotel and I see bad photos, I put aside." (I01)*
			"I think it is very, very much appealing. It is one picture. The idea, from my point of view, is not giving you information. It is just motivating you, saying, well, would you like to be there? If you are using the ideal model, this has very much to do with the attention so that I can get detailed information afterwards." (I13)
Content type	Utilitarian	Product attributes	*"For the information, they have with the product, I read the quality, what they are for. For example, the tissue they are made of." (I07)*
			"If I want to buy a product, I focus on the product itself. There is a similar part in the content. Yes. But, the focus, the principal focus, is the product itself." (I16)
	Hedonic	Product attributes, Promotional	*"Most of all, it is important, the specification about the product to just see if it is a good one and if it is worth buying it. And if it is useful for me in any way, you know, so it is important. All the information I can get." (I05)*
			"This is important for the price, of course. Location, the price, the quality, how many stars? And so on." (I06)

Table 3.
The content typology choice of older consumers

Source(s): Authors' own work

It is important for me as a customer because, well, you have a lot of products that, in fact, are substitutes, and it can make a difference for me. If really, I feel it, they are substitutes; I engage more in consuming a product that I know some social concerns than another that has not. (I15)

From the above statements, the male participants (I04, I12, I14) stated that they did not pay attention to these contents. In contrast, female participants (I11, I15) revealed it was essential for them to be informed about the subject.

4.3 Older consumers' OBA behaviours
According to the OBA (Wilk *et al.*, 2020) mentioned in the literature review, older consumers' behaviours are reflected in all dimensions, as seen in Table 4. The paper then exemplifies the findings in detail.

The finding suggested that older consumers shared the same engagement behaviours online. Most performed like, Share, and comment online, but it did not happen often. In addition, the only reasons that drove them to do so were because they thought it was needed or helpful to others regardless of brand-related content or not. For examples,

Always. I like, love, hate or something, and I make a comment. Always. I can say always. I think that if it is someone I know, a poem, a picture or something, I like to give my opinion. I think this because when I also post something, I like to have the feedback on what I posted it. So, I think the other people also like it, so I always write the comments. (I07)

Sometimes, I do comment, for instance, well, if the issues that are discussed there are my importance in my eyes. For instance, I am unable to share whatever comes from (Phone X). I do not like it. I do understand that this is a big and very good company, but I am not able to share it. And if some

Older consumers' online brand advocacy dimensions	Represented quotes
Brand knowledge	*"You actually are promoting something, and that is because you, in fact, have experience of that or knowledge about that. And you were promoting it because that is what you believe in."* (I09) *"People know me for using (Jacket Brand X) for a long time now. That is my main image. So, I think that is the best publicity."* (I12)
Brand defence	*"Defend the brand. I can give my testimony. I can give what were my experiences. (. . .) And if I only sense some things powered bad about this brand, I have to respect the other opinions, but I can also in opposite to say, okay, maybe you had a bad experience moment. I know it, but I have years of experience"* (I16) *"If something happens to the product or the label or the company, sometimes you do have well, you do not have, but sometimes you feel, you have to advocate for the label. That has already happened to me."* (I04)
Brand positivity	*"(Clothe Brand X), it's something that for me, I have a ton of buy and everything. It's a good product. It's something that is, you can't deny that it's definitely a good one."* (I10) *"My recent experiences tell me that I, as a consumer, can trust, for instance, (Brand X). And well, if some people ask me, what do you say about (Brand X)? I have an excellent experience. I never had a bad experience."* (I15)
Positive virtual visual cue	*"When sometimes it's very funny indeed. And sometimes I put likes or laughter and sometimes, I share, I share some."* (I08) *"If I like, I put, and I choose the icon that I must if it is a smile or it is like this, giving thumb or clapping."* (I13)

Source(s): Authors' own work

product tells me something, I do share products or news from (Phone Y), for instance. Of course, the companies I like, I do, I can share, but do I have reasons to share anything coming from Coca-Cola? Perhaps I do not. (I04)

Yes, there is a Portuguese page which is called ironically. Ironically, which also has to do with political and social criticism. When sometimes it is very funny indeed, sometimes I put likes or laughter, and sometimes, I share, I share some. (I08)

They did not usually post or share when asked about their personal-related things. Older consumers mostly posted about their professional-related content or things they were interested in, such as poems, pictures, and quotes. The reasons behind this were to avoid arguments from different opinions and not see it as necessary to show their lives. In another situation, most participants also produced content by themselves, as user-generated content, by giving their opinions to others, mainly on hotels and restaurants. As an example,

I always comment, or I would say that I always comment on the places where I go, short comments, (. . .), But I like to comment and say, well, if it has been a good experience or not, if it has been according to my expectations or not, and my expectations, of course, derived from the type of information I got before. (. . .) And I think that information I can give, positive or negative, is important for other people choosing the same product type. So, I normally am very fond of writing my comments (I15)

However, when it comes to brands, they were primarily willing to make recommendations offline when the conversation arose and with a closed circle of people, friends, and family. Similarly, when mentioning the online communities they belonged to, many participants belonged to some online communities that were private or online open communities that were independent and non-brand related. Only some participants (I14, I11, I01, I04) belonged to online brand communities.

Furthermore, participants were asked to scale themselves on a scale of 0–10, where 10 is the most loyal, on whether they consider themselves loyal consumers. The findings revealed that they consider themselves, to some extent, a loyal consumer, with an average of 6. The main reason was that they were conservative consumers. They have experience and know that the brands or products are good;

I am loyal to those brands that I have tried and tested, and then I buy it because it is safe. I consider it is safe. It is a good product. It is something I like. (I09)

Oh, a loyal consumer. Yes. I do not like to try a new thing because I think I can be disappointed. So, I tried the ones that I know are already good, and I like them. (I07)

Interestingly, female participants (I07, I08, I09, I05, I15) admitted they preferred Portuguese products and brands to foreign ones. Although no direct question was raised on intrusive content, this topic emerged in many interviews, negatively influencing the brands. Most participants agreed to give away their personal contacts, mostly email, for buying products, joining loyal programs, and subscribing to a newsletter. However, participants felt the intrusive, permanently deleted or moved to a spam folder, and it negatively influenced those brands. For examples,

That is if you want the newsletter. I try not to have too much information. It is not necessary. So if you want, because I know through the internet, you are pressed often. You are often pressed to be focused on buying, choosing, getting, you know. So, I do not want that pressure. (I05)

Well, that is a hard equilibrium because some of the brands are very intrusive. I call them very intrusive. Others are not. So, I prefer the ones that are not very intrusive, but well, as to the others, we can always send them to the spam. (. . .) I think that brands should be aware of that. We like to be informed to feel that we belong to the family of, I do not know what brand, but too much, it is too much. (I15)

Participants gave different opinions based on their experiences when asked about being an advocate of a brand. Some admitted to being brand advocates, including defending, praising, recommending, trusting, and using a brand. For examples,

> Also, to my wife, my kids, well, if I like (Phone X), why would I give a (Phone Y)? So, in this house, everyone has (Phone X), my TV is (Brand X) and a lot, the washing machine is (Brand X). Air condition is (Brand X) (. . .). If I do like the company, why wouldn't I have a credit card with (Brand Y) name on it? Why wouldn't I buy shares of (Brand Y)? So, I am a stockholder, customer, and follower. (I04)

> When I speak with my colleagues, I said. Okay, they can have another idea, but always, I defend it. (. . .) But I do not know the way that they make the products, the shoe, is a way or the support is very comfortable. It is good for our legs and our muscles. I feel very good. Some people say, okay, I do not like it very well. Okay, good. But for me, it is the best (. . .) I have to respect the other opinions, but I can also in opposite to say, okay, maybe you had a bad experience moment I know it, but I have years of experience (I16)

> People have known me for using (Brand X) for a long time now. That is my main image. So, I think that is the best publicity. An argument for a brand that I can make is to wear it or to go to a dinner party and bring a bottle of a specific brand of wine and offer at that dinner. So, the wine I choose to bring is the best thing I can do for that wine. It is to actually use it, buy it, and actually consuming it. I think that more than the words, it is about deeds. To do it, to use it, to consume it. I think that is the best publicity that one could make. (I12)

From all the statements presented above, older consumers' behaviours indicate brand advocate characteristics in the online environment, which also overlap with the offline environment.

5. Discussions
From the findings, older consumers accessed the Internet daily, and their activities online can be categorised into four groups: professional, social, leisure, and consumer activities. They mainly searched for many aspects, including professional-related information, recreation activities, or products/services. Furthermore, they described themselves as non-heavy buyers/consumers. In this regard, demographic factors such as income, stage of life, education, and gender need to also be considered. Indeed, older, wealthier consumers are more likely to shop online (Nunan and Di Domenico, 2019). Older consumers firmly expressed the potential of less and less usage of social media because they did not feel it reflected reality and created narcissism, corresponding to the study about narcissism used as a self-promotion tool (Moon *et al.*, 2016).

In contrast to earlier research, they are more inclined to use the Internet for social connectivity rather than information seeking (Kim *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, what consumers do online has evolved as online activities, and people's interests have also changed. While searching online and exposed to content, this consumer segmentation expresses concern about its reliability, demonstrating that they only trust official or institutional support information sources and user-generated content. Older consumers tend to be more suspicious and critical about content marketing than younger people (Stürmer and Einwiller, 2023), and even a single affect-rich negative review substantially impacts them (von Helversen *et al.*, 2018).

When searching for online information, older consumers demonstrated different decision-making processes based on products or services. Even though they seek less information and deliberate higher information avoidance in consumer choices than younger adults (Deng *et al.*, 2023), they browsed web content to make decisions for things such as clothes, shoes, or anything that could be defective, then conducted physical/offline purchases. On the contrary,

they finished searching for and purchasing services such as flights, lodging, or tickets online. Given that the current study was undertaken during the COVID-19 outbreak, this could be a topic of concern. While researchers confirmed that making online purchases to avoid socialisation in physical stores during the pandemic lowered panic and perceived risk (Ait Youssef *et al.*, 2020; Ishfaq and Mengxing, 2022; Toska *et al.*, 2023), the perception of reality may prevent older consumers from purchasing online (Rahman and Hussain, 2014). Perception of reality involves the willingness of users to employ their five senses to observe a tangible product rather than purchasing untouchable and unperceivable goods from online platforms (Soh *et al.*, 2020). However, regardless of the products or services, older consumers showed concern about payment security issues. The reason is that online criminals always target older adults, particularly those who are new to online purchases and are often regarded to be more naive than those of other age groups (Soh *et al.*, 2020). Perhaps the negative stereotypes about older users of digital technologies play a role here, as digital banking was never designed for older users but rather for young and middle-aged people who were thought to be more inclined to accept digital technology (Rosales *et al.*, 2023).

Moving forward, the current study also provides insights into older consumers' content typology choices, responding to the fact that there is little agreement in the literature about the role of different appeals and message characteristics on this consumer group (Yannopoulou *et al.*, 2023). They preferred different content types and formats depending on the product category. Regarding content format, they preferred motion video for utilitarian products and picture and video for hedonic products, matching a recent study (Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024a) that found photos to be the most engaging and popular format utilised by firms in their online community. Regarding content type, older consumers agreed that product attribute content was preferred when browsing for utilitarian and hedonic products. Older consumers rely more on cognitive aspects when searching online content, although they favour short, impactful formats. The information presented to them must be in a simple format, which leads to improvement in decision performance and repeat purchasing (Carpenter and Yoon, 2015). Compared to younger people, they are more focused on value-based information and product attributes, especially when making online purchase decisions (von Helversen *et al.*, 2018). The reason is that informational appeals are more effective than emotional ones in convincing older consumers (Teichert *et al.*, 2018). However, a recent study argued that their underlying motivations to engage with content were affective/ emotional- and nostalgic-oriented (Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024a).
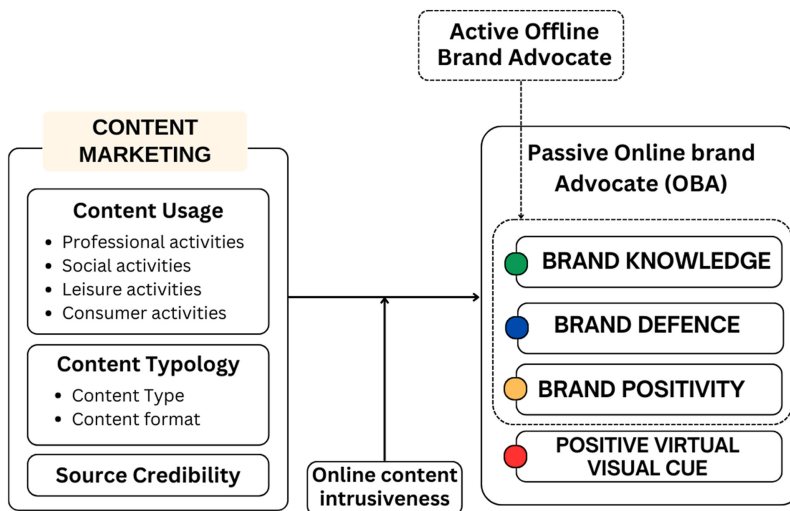
The findings also reveal the OBA behaviours of older consumers. They have continually interacted online, using "Likes, shares, and comments" when they believe it will benefit others, but not for personal reasons. As a result, they began creating online content, such as giving feedback and writing user reviews for others when they had positive or negative experiences with products or services. In this sense, their behaviours align with younger people; when perceiving themselves as informed and educated about a brand, they are compelled to communicate their in-depth cognition and intimate knowledge of that brand with others (Abdelrazek and El-Bassiouny, 2022). Nonetheless, when recommending their favourite brands to others, which older consumers do constantly and willingly, they prefer to do so in-person with their inner circle of friends and families. Frequent interactions through personal contact and building meaningful communications are essential to their consumer decision-making process (Jahn *et al.*, 2012). Only occasionally do they voice their opinions in private or non-branded online communities. The findings could explain their behaviours, as they did not want to give personal information to avoid disputes and narcissism, which is precisely why they used social media less.

Brand loyalty among older consumers has been extensively explored. According to Yap and Yazdanifard's (2014) research, older consumers are more loyal than younger consumers, and purchasing unfamiliar brands may be risky. They are also more likely to remain attached

to the product they use longer than the younger ones. Brand loyalty can be an intergenerational exchange between a grandmother and a grandchild since the elders reported numerous consumption experiences with their grandchildren (Godefroit-Winkel *et al.*, 2019). Another study recently agreed that family-related content about grandchildren was among the most engaging for older consumers (Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024a). This study confirms the existing literature as they described themselves, to some extent, as a loyal consumer. It is worth noting that, despite their loyalty to their favourite brands, they sometimes felt intrusive while receiving information from the company.

Older consumers are portrayed as brand advocates who defend, recommend, praise, use/consume, and trust the brand. The study is congruent with Chiosa and Anastasiei's (2018) research, which found that a positive attitude is the most crucial factor determining consumer intention to become brand advocates. Abdelrazek and El-Bassiouny (2022), who studied millennial consumers, also indicated that consumers could not advocate for a brand online without a positive attitude and strong brand confidence. The current study examines positive attitudes and discusses insights into older consumers' behaviours, which reflect the four OBA dimensions proposed by Wilk *et al.* (2020). As a result, this study proposes a framework, summarising the main findings presented in Figure 3.

From Figure 3, older consumers share valuable knowledge as experienced consumers with others, defend the brand when necessary, and suggest and endorse the brand. Furthermore, they use visual online expressions such as likes, reactions, and emoticons to convey their good feeling. Using emoticons may trigger older consumers' identity threats. When exposed to young social cues, they tend to feel younger, protecting the self from negative stereotypes associated with ageing (Amatulli *et al.*, 2018). Even though the evidence covers all dimensions of OBA, older consumers' activities also involve offline advocacy. As previously discussed, they valued personal contact and in-person communication when recommending, defending, and discussing a brand. Thus, this study argues that all OBA dimensions represent older consumers' behaviours, with some dimensions reflecting offline advocacy. Parrott *et al.* (2015) suggested the antecedents to advocacy behaviours, including brand recommendation, brand discussions, and brand defence, further differentiating active

Source(s): Authors' own work

from passive advocates. Hence, the current study further derives that older consumers are passive online brand advocates who tend to focus on information seeking and observation (Parrott *et al.*, 2015) and active offline brand advocates who promote their preferred brand voluntarily, express opinions or comments, and defend the brand against negative opinions or rumours.

It is to confirm that content marketing and OBA are not two distinctively separate constructs but are related, confirming the existing literature (Aljarah *et al.*, 2022; Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024a). The usage, source credibility and intrusiveness of online content are factors related to this segmentation of OBA behaviours. In summary, the study suggests that online content can be explained in the context of OBA, which can be critical and one of the reasons for developing OBA in this segmentation. Furthermore, their content typology choices can be incorporated into discussing content marketing strategies.

6. Conclusions

Despite the growing number of studies looking into digital content marketing, the existing literature on the consequences of digital content marketing on older consumers' behaviours is still limited and undeveloped for academic research. They are a prominent demographic and critical target group for products and service providers. This current study believes that older consumers have distinct behaviours, which necessitates firms developing appropriate marketing communication strategies.

The study addresses its research questions: *(RQ1) What are older consumers' online activities and OBA behaviours? (RQ2) What are the preferred online content typologies of the older consumer? And why?* Older consumers' diverse content usages influence their decision-making processes, whether they purchase products or services. The utilitarian and hedonic product categories also play a role in their content typology choices in the aspects of content format and content type. Furthermore, their behaviours reflect their roles as passive and active online brand advocates. Because the online content that older consumers seek is involved in and impacts their OBA behaviours, an OBA framework is developed in this study to explain the use of content marketing in the context of OBA.

6.1 Theoretical implications

The findings of this research offer scientific evidence of older consumers' insights within the online context and essential theoretical contributions. First, the theoretical discussion includes the aspects of content marketing related to OBA. As a result, it confirms the existing literature on bridging the two concepts and extends the digital marketing literature. Second, the study discusses new insights into older consumers' content usage and identifies their content typology choices, adding to the literature from a different perspective. Researchers and practitioners are growing interested in content marketing and determining which content message strategies, especially in social media, are well suited to foster engagement (Deng *et al.*, 2021; Meire *et al.*, 2022; Zhang and Du, 2020). Hence, the current study will offer valuable input about this issue. Third, the outcomes of this research confront the prior statement that marketing scholars frequently devalue older people (Barnhart and Peñaloza, 2013). It confirms the significance of this growing segment, suggesting that they serve as both passive online and active offline brand advocates. In addition, another implication in digital marketing literature is the enrichment of the OBA dimensions of older consumers by indicating their roles and content usage, typology, and other related factors. So far, no study from Southern European countries has investigated the perspective mentioned earlier. Therefore, the paper sheds some light on the gap identified by some recent studies (Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024a; Yannopoulou *et al.*, 2023).

6.2 Managerial implications
Content marketing is critical for marketers in today's digital age. Content sources and strategies are also essential practices that they can utilise to augment many brand-related outcomes. This study focused on developing recommendations for how marketers or business owners can successfully apply content marketing in a digital environment. First, it provides evidence concerning the relationship between content marketing and OBA. The research explains the older consumer group's different content usages and concerns, allowing firms and decision-makers to design the right online marketing strategies. Second, Previous research (Ihm and Hsieh, 2015) has shown that online usage can improve the mental health of older consumers, reducing depression. Thus, this study helps practitioners target and design appropriate strategies for this group, promoting their well-being. Third, marketers can benefit from developing a message strategy for older consumers. This study can provide the fundamental format and type guidelines when creating, sharing, and responding to content. Practitioners should produce content based on product category, employ utilitarian and hedonic concepts, and use appropriate content types and formats. Furthermore, while researchers regarded content marketing as a new form of less intrusive and more informative advertising (Stürmer and Einwiller, 2023), older consumers, to some extent, still perceived it as intrusive. Hence, marketers must exercise greater caution when implementing content strategies. Finally, since older consumers display passive online and active offline brand advocates, practitioners should develop a marketing plan and allocate a budget accordingly.

7. Limitations and future research
The present study of older consumers' content usage, content typology choices, and OBA behaviours provides a valuable starting point for empirically demonstrating the importance of content marketing and older consumer segmentation. However, it has some limitations that could be addressed in future research.

First, while the study offers insights into the topics, it is also essential to emphasise more prominent investigation in terms of methodology. Thus, future research should include other methodologies, such as questionnaires and surveys, to reinforce the solidarity of the study. The study was conducted in Southern European countries, Portugal's context. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalised and were in question if applied to other environments without further research. The criteria for choosing participants were that they needed to be English speakers. Thus, it might limit diversity in terms of different backgrounds. Likewise, the sampling method used in the study was snowball sampling, possibly limiting the diversity in occupations.

Second, regarding the research context, differences in social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can influence how consumers engage (Gruner and Power, 2018). Therefore, future research should look into the effectiveness of content marketing strategies on OBA across multiple online platforms. Moreover, evaluating the proposed framework from other contexts, such as different age groups and product categories, could also be an option. Even though the current research focuses mainly on providing insight into older consumers, it is recommended that future research consider comparing the notion of OBA between older and younger consumers.

Third, since the study argues that content marketing can be explained as one factor in generating OBA, more studies on the impact of OBA would be appropriate. The findings also raise a question about the effectiveness of more diverse content sources, as different forms of communication rely on different information sources (Stremersch *et al.*, 2013). Further study should include content generated by users, employees, firms, and intermediaries on OBA. Accordingly, future research can enrich the proposed framework by integrating other variables/constructs that could generate OBA.

Fourth, in the context of this study, older consumers aged 55 and older were treated as one segmentation. However, the marketing communications literature has little consistency in defining mature consumers. When viewed as more than 50, consumers are not a single market, and more precise segmentations are needed (Yannopoulou *et al.*, 2023). Hence, future research can consider other sub-segment dimensions along with chronological age, such as physical health age and self-perception of age.

Fifth, as new technology like artificial intelligence (AI) emerges, applying such technology for content customisation can change users' online behaviours and cause negative experiences (Barbosa *et al.*, 2023). Further studies should consider the influence of these new technologies on older consumers' behaviours concerning their data privacy.

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Appendix

	What do we want to know?	How to ask?
1. Online behaviours	• Internet Usage (How often, how much time spend, activities, reasons to use, etc.) • Social Media Usage	1. What is your daily Internet usage routine? 2. How often do you access the Internet? 3. What do you search/look for online? And why? 4. What social media sites do you use?
2. Content marketing	• The understanding of contents, purpose, and influence (online to offline?) • Content Typology ➢ Format: video, infographic, reviews, articles, etc. ➢ Types: promotional, organisational, relational contents	5. When thinking about online content, you think of . . . . 6. How do you normally find information online about products/services? ➢ With what intentions? ➢ What category of products/services do you usually search the most? ➢ How does it influence your thoughts or actions? ➢ Does it influence your actions offline/ physically? 7. What types and formats of content from the brand do you prefer? And why? (Give examples of each type and format)
3. Online consumer engagement	• How they engage (like, share, comment, subscribe or follow) • Reasons for engagement and which content types they feel more engaged (multimedia/stats/video/etc.)	8. Now, let's think about any brands you are usually in contact with online ➢ Please explain the interaction process that you have with the brands
4. Online brand advocacy (OBA)	• Favourite brand in contact and belonged to online community • Being an advocate for brands	9. How do you get new updates from the brands? 10. How did the content you obtained influence your thoughts or actions? 11. Have you belonged to brand online communities? And why did you join them? ➢ On which platforms did you join their communities? ➢ Have you recommended these brands to other online users? ➢ Do you consider yourself a loyal consumer? Specify on a scale from 0 to 10 12. In your opinion, being an advocate of a brand is . . . .

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table A1.
The interview guide

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