

# Short-Lived, Long-Lasting Impact: A Study On Ephemeral Contents' Role in Consumer Behaviour and Brand Building

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## Abstract

The rapid advancement of technology and the digital space is proliferating short-lived content, fueling the rise of ephemeral content. This type of content typically disappears within 24 hours, creating a sense of fear of missing out (FOMO), driving immediate interaction, and enhancing audience engagement.

In today's fast-paced world, where instant gratification is highly valued, ephemeral content has carved out a unique space in digital marketing. This study explores how brands leverage ephemeral content marketing as a catalyst for growth, fostering urgency among consumers and influencing their purchasing behaviour. Using a mixed-method approach, it examines how this strategy shapes consumer decision-making and patterns of impulsive purchasing.

Furthermore, this study explored key insights into audience behaviour, highlighting how real-time engagement is a crucial factor in sustaining user interest. As ephemeral content continues to rise, it presents a powerful opportunity for brands to interact with customers via polls, live Comments and Q&A, and stories to create deeper consumer connections and maximize marketing impact.

**Keywords:** Ephemeral content, FOMO, Consumer Behaviour, Ephemeral Marketing, Digital Marketing, Purchase intent.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of ephemeral content, meaning "lasting only a day" (Maran & Raj, 2024), has evolved from historical transient experiences to today's digital, short-lived formats like Instagram Stories. Its popularity stems from its ability to capture attention; knowing content will disappear leads to increased focus and retention (Campbell et al., 2021). Brands leverage this for authentic, real-time storytelling, building trust and relatability. This immediate engagement is amplified by interactive features on platforms like Snapchat and Instagram, turning passive viewers into active participants. A major psychological driver is Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), which prompts immediate consumption and boosts engagement and purchases (Kumar & Nayak, 2019; McClure & Seock, 2020). FOMO can also positively impact brand attitude and loyalty (Chen & Cheung, 2019; Kivetz & He, 2017).

Beyond urgency, users engage with ephemeral content due to brand trust, immediacy, and peer influence (Shaikh, Kumar & Syed, 2021; Kumar et al., 2021). This shift reflects how information is consumed, with

ephemeral platforms offering intimate spaces for authentic engagement (Bayer et al., 2016). The mobile-first behavior of consumers, preferring short, vertical content, further drives impulsive purchases when combined with limited-time offers.

Despite its benefits, academic research on ephemeral content's long-term ROI and impact on sustained consumer action remains limited (Campbell et al., 2021). Nonetheless, ephemeral content is redefining brand storytelling in the digital age.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's fast-paced digital world, every brand strives to maintain a strong online presence to stay connected with its audience. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp have made it easier for businesses to showcase their products and services on a global scale. Additionally, the rise of ephemeral content such as Instagram Stories and WhatsApp Status has allowed brands to create more authentic and engaging interactions.

The research titled **“How ephemeral content marketing fosters brand love and customer engagement,”** focuses on exploring the impact of ephemeral content marketing on brand love and customer engagement, focusing on the mediating roles of brand authenticity, self-brand connection, and advertising value. Using a quantitative approach, the research collected data from 728 participants in Vietnam through an online survey. Additionally, the study highlights six key dimensions that make ephemeral content more valuable to customers, i.e., entertainment, trendiness, informativeness, interactivity, aesthetic quality, and perceived relevance. Additionally, the study evaluates multiple dimensions of ephemeral content marketing, it does not delve deeply into the individual effects of these dimensions, indicating a gap for future exploration. (*Khoi et.al., 2024*)

Another paper, **“From archive cultures to ephemeral content, and back: Studying Instagram Stories with digital methods,”** explored the challenges of studying ephemeral digital content, focusing on Instagram Stories, which disappear after 24 hours. Due to Instagram's API restrictions, the study uses two alternative research strategies. The findings highlight the tension between ephemerality and archival practices, raising ethical and methodological questions about studying temporary digital content. Overall, this research paper contributes to the discussion on digital research methods in a post-API era, emphasizing the need for innovative approaches to understanding digital cultures. (*Bainotti et al., 2021*)

The research paper, **“The Complexity of Collecting Digital and Social Media Data in Ephemeral Contexts,”** highlights the challenges of gathering and maintaining social media data, particularly from platforms like Twitter. It emphasizes how data ephemerality (e.g., deleted accounts or posts) impacts the legitimacy and reliability of research. The study identifies two key gaps in literature: limited methodological contributions and insufficient discussion on managing ephemeral data. This work advances information science by underscoring the difficulties in social media data collection and the need for methodological improvements to enhance dataset authenticity and reliability. (*Walker, S, 2017*)

The research paper titled - **“Analysing the Attitude of Social Media Users towards Ephemeral Marketing as a Digital Marketing Tool”** explores trust, FOMO, immediacy, and social pressure with an emphasis on Indian brands. 377 young social media users were surveyed to gather data, and replies were analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS and ANOVA. Results indicate that interaction with ephemeral material is strongly influenced by FOMO, trust, and immediacy. Consumer reactions are also greatly influenced by social pressure and aesthetic attraction. The study gives companies information to develop successful advertising on the rising significance of short-lived content in digital marketing. In

summary, ephemeral content is an essential tool for contemporary marketing since it increases user engagement through immediacy, FOMO, trust, and visual appeal. (*Dange et al. 2021*)

The study, “**Unlocking the Potential of the Ephemeral Content Shared on Instagram to Stimulate Customer Purchase Intention: Empirical Evidence From The Fashion Industry In Sri Lanka,**” explored how Instagram's ephemeral content affects customer purchase intentions in Sri Lanka's fashion sector. Based on a survey of 384 Gen Z Instagram users and interviews, it found trustworthy and engaging content influences purchases, while confusing information deters them. The study provides a model for marketers, advising them to create trustworthy, interesting, and educational ephemeral content. (*Bulumulla & Gamage, 2024*)

The study, “**Sharing the small moments: ephemeral social interaction on Snapchat,**” investigated how Snapchat's ephemeral nature influences user experiences compared to other social media. Employing a multi-method approach (ESM surveys and qualitative interviews), emotional and social outcomes were assessed. In one study, 154 undergraduates reported on over 11,000 interactions, revealing Snapchat interactions were more enjoyable than texting, email, and Facebook, though less supportive than face-to-face communication. Overall, the research concludes that Snapchat's features, such as real-time content creation and temporary visibility, enhance user experience by fostering enjoyment, spontaneity, and genuine social bonding. (*Bayer et al., 2015*)

Another research, “**The effect of ephemeral marketing on perception and engagement. A focus on Gen Z consumers in the fitness apparel industry,**” investigated how ephemeral content (like Instagram Stories) impacts Gen Z's perception and engagement in the fitness apparel market. Using two focus groups, the study found that FOMO, word-of-mouth, and electronic word-of-mouth significantly influence consumer behavior. Crucially, perception drives engagement, with Gen Z reacting more to urgent and authentic ephemeral content (*Houshan & Siilsalu, 2024*)

Also a study, “**The use of ephemera with particular reference to blood and organ donation: a review of sources,**” examined how ephemeral materials like leaflets are used by UK health organizations to promote blood and organ donation. It highlights the need for clear and relevant health information to improve communication strategies. (*Rose, G. M., 1994*)

## 2.1 RESEARCH GAP

Ephemeral content has proven effective in engaging consumers, especially millennials on platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, helping brands tailor their strategies. However, most studies focus on limited platforms and rely heavily on college students, making it hard to generalize findings. Research often uses one-time, qualitative data, missing how user behavior evolves. Key psychological factors beyond FOMO and ethical concerns like manipulation are underexplored. There's also a lack of cross-platform comparisons and deeper analysis of elements like interactivity, content type, and brand relationship. Future studies should address these gaps to better understand ephemeral content's role in digital marketing.

## 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

**The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)** helps us understand why people use media the way they do. Introduced in the 1970s, it says we don't just passively watch or scroll, we choose content based on what we need, like entertainment, connection, or information. When it comes to ephemeral content like Instagram Stories or Snapchat, this makes a lot of sense. People tap through stories to relax, stay in touch with friends, express themselves, or just catch up quickly. The fast, fleeting nature of these posts fits perfectly with our need for instant gratification and the constant urge to stay updated or risk feeling left out (hello, FOMO!).

**Narrative Paradigm Theory**, by Walter Fisher, brings in another perspective. It suggests that humans naturally connect with stories more than with facts and arguments. Think about how engaging a good Instagram Story can be, even if it's short, it still has a beginning, middle, and end. These small stories feel real, relatable, and emotionally engaging. Because they disappear quickly, they create urgency and feel more personal, making people more likely to respond and remember them.

**The Hook Model**, created by Nir Eyal, explains how platforms get us coming back again and again. It's a cycle: something triggers us (like a notification), we take action (watch a story), get a quick reward (something entertaining or emotional) and often invest a little (comment, like, or share). Over time, this loop forms a habit, and that's exactly how ephemeral content keeps us hooked. The time-limited format makes it feel urgent and valuable, drawing us in repeatedly.

Ephemeral content's widespread appeal stems from three key theories. Uses and Gratifications Theory highlights how it fulfills users' needs for entertainment, connection, and self-expression. The Narrative Paradigm Theory explains its relatability through authentic mini-narratives, fostering trust. Finally, The Hook Model reveals how it builds habits via triggers, quick rewards, and ongoing interaction. Together, these frameworks show why fleeting content is so engaging and addictive.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study, "Short-Lived, Long-Lasting Impact: A Study on the Role of Ephemeral Contents' in Consumer Behaviour and Brand Building," used a mixed-method approach.

The quantitative phase involved an online survey of 202 Indian social media users (students, alumni, staff) who had made purchases after viewing ephemeral content. The survey utilized multiple-choice and Likert scale questions to measure the influence of formats like Instagram Stories and Snapchat posts on consumer awareness, FOMO, impulse buying, and brand interaction.

After the quantitative analysis was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of how ephemeral content marketing is being adopted and applied for brand building. This phase involved 10 in-depth interviews with professionals working in social media marketing and digital strategy. The professionals interviewed were:

- Sarthak Sharma, Assistant Manager, Organic by MSL
- Tuba Faheem, Senior Account Executive, Ogilvy
- Samadrita De, Performance Marketer, Green Reef Pvt. Ltd.
- Diya Bhansali, Assistant Social Media Manager, Hosteller
- Saurav Kumar, Social Media Manager, Beeida & freelance digital marketer
- Pradeep Vishwakarma, Social Media Strategist, Publicis Global Delivery
- Aryamitra Mondal, Copywriter & Social Media Strategist, Brewitty
- Hrish Singh Mehta, Social Media Manager, CricTacker
- Rohan Manjhi, Lead Social Media Manager, Maptodigital & freelance content strategist
- Ananya Shrivastava, Social Media Manager, AmberStudent & freelance digital marketer

These interviews provided crucial industry insights into how brands leverage ephemeral content for urgency, engagement, impulse purchases, and brand loyalty in the fast-paced digital landscape, enriching the survey findings with practical context.

#### 3.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze how an ephemeral content marketing strategy is a catalyst for the brand.
2. To examine how brands utilize ephemeral content marketing to create a fear of missing out (FOMO).

3. To examine the impact of ephemeral content on consumer purchasing behaviour toward brands.
4. To explore the influence of ephemeral content on consumers' impulsive purchasing behaviour.
5. To analyze the impact of ephemeral content on customer behaviour and their decision-making on brand.

### **3.2 HYPOTHESIS**

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between the use of ephemeral content and growth in brand visibility and audience engagement.

H<sub>01</sub> There is no significant relationship between the use of ephemeral content and growth in brand visibility and audience engagement.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between the consumption of ephemeral content and the level of FOMO (Fear of missing out) experienced by the audience.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the consumption of ephemeral content and the level of FOMO (Fear of missing out) experienced by the audience.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant relationship between engagement with flash sales and the tendency for impulsive purchases among consumers.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between engagement with flash sales and the tendency for impulsive purchases among consumers.

### **3.3 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION**

**Ephemeral Content-** Ephemeral content is short-lived digital material, usually available for 24 hours or less. It's designed to create urgency and encourage immediate viewing, often seen as casual photos and videos on platforms like Instagram Stories and Snapchat, frequently including interactive features (Fresco Data, 2024).

**Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)-** FOMO is anxiety caused by the perception that others are having more satisfying experiences, often amplified by social media. It also includes the social pressure of feeling excluded from positive collective experiences (McGinnis, 2024).

**Consumer Behavior-** Consumer behavior is the study of how individuals, groups, or organizations select, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy their needs, and the impact of these processes (Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 2001).

### **3.4 PILOT STUDY**

The researcher chose 10 questions and selected participants, and the pilot study was conducted to further refine the survey. The participants were asked to complete the survey and provide more comprehensive feedback to improve the survey. The feedback was largely positive. Upon suggestions from both participants and the guide, the number of questions was standardized. Following the suggestions, complex words were also simplified. With the rich insights gained from the pilot study, the survey was finalized and moved to the main data collection phase.

### **3.5 SAMPLING**

The sampling methodology in this research combined the Snowball method with stratified random sampling. By stratifying the sample based on relevant demographics and then utilizing the Snowball method to expand the reach through participant referrals, a diverse range of perspectives was captured. This approach enhanced the richness and comprehensiveness of the dataset, helping to better understand the strategic impact of ephemeral content in digital marketing, particularly about brand visibility, FOMO, impulse buying, cross-industry adoption, and ROI measurement across different demographic groups.



### 3.6 QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire employed a combination of multiple-choice and Likert scale questions to quantify participant mindsets and identify behavioral patterns regarding ephemeral content. Open-ended questions were also included, allowing for the sharing of nuanced opinions and personal insights, thereby enriching the study's qualitative dimension. This structured yet flexible format enabled the exploration of various research aspects while ensuring consistent data collection. Both question types allowed respondents to voice their perspectives on the awareness, impact, and effectiveness of ephemeral content in influencing consumer engagement, brand visibility, FOMO, and impulse purchasing behaviors. The collected data provides valuable insights into how ephemeral content drives consumer behavior through mechanisms like FOMO, brand engagement, flash sales, and increased impulsive buying. Additionally, the research sheds light on the ethical considerations and potential impacts of using short-lived content as a marketing strategy. Throughout the research, ethical standards were maintained by prioritizing participants' rights, privacy, and overall well-being.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

### 4.1 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The data was gathered from respondents across four age groups, i.e. 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, and 45 and above as a part of an ongoing survey conducted in India using purposive and snowball sampling methods via Google form. A total of 202 respondents were gathered to explore how ephemeral content shapes consumer impulsive buying behaviour and influences decision making and brand perception.

#### 4.1.1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

**Table:1 Demographic profile of target audience.**

Gender	Percentage (%)	N
Male	44.5	90
Female	55.44	112
Prefer not to say	0	0
Age Group		
18-24	71.78	145
25-34	22.27	45
35-44	2.97	6
45 and above	2.97	6
Occupation		
Full Time Job	37.62	76
Students	33.16	67
Freelancer	14.35	29
Business	9.40	19
Other	5.44	11

The target audience was primarily female (55.44%, n=112) and predominantly young, with 71.78% (n=145) aged 18-24. The next largest age group was 25-34, at 22.25% (n=45). In terms of occupation, the audience was diverse. Full-time employees represented 37.62% (n=76), closely followed by students at 33.16% (n=67). Freelancers constituted 14.35% (n=29), business owners 9.40% (n=19), and "Other" occupations 5.44% (n=11). This demographic mix suggests a valuable audience for understanding engagement with ephemeral marketing.

## 4.1.2 SOCIAL MEDIA HABITS

Frequency of Social Media Usage	Percentage (%)	N
Daily	93.56	189
Weekly	5.94	12
Monthly	0	0
Rarely/Never	0.49	1
	100	202

**Table 2: Frequency of Social media habits of target audience.**

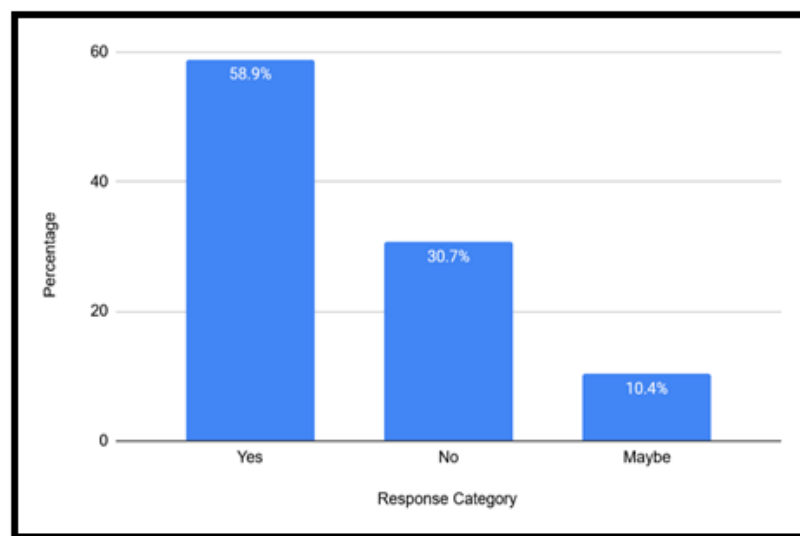
Social Media Platforms	Percentage (%)	N
Instagram	88.11	178
Snapchat	28.21	57
Facebook	24.75	50
Whatsapp	86.13	174
LinkedIn	39.60	80
X (twitter)	1.98	4
Pinterest	0.99	2

**Table 3: Social media habits of target audience.**

The data reveals high daily social media engagement among the target audience, with 93.56% (n=189) accessing platforms daily. Instagram is the most used platform at 88.11% (n=178), closely followed by WhatsApp at 86.13% (n=174). Snapchat is used by 28.21% (n=57) and Facebook by 24.75% (n=50). LinkedIn sees moderate use at 39.60% (n=80). Conversely, platforms like X (Twitter) and Pinterest have minimal usage at 1.98% (n=4) and 0.99% (n=2) respectively. Weekly social media engagement stands at 5.94% (n=12), with negligible monthly use and only 0.49% (n=1) reporting rare or no social media use.

### 4.1.3 Ephemeral content awareness.

Among 202 respondents, 58.9% (n=119) were aware of "ephemeral content," while 30.7% (n=62) were not, and 10.4% (n=21) were uncertain. Awareness is notably higher among younger age groups (18-24 and 25-34), likely due to their frequent use of platforms like Instagram Stories and Snapchat where such content is prevalent. Conversely, awareness decreases in older demographics (35-44 and 45+), indicating a potential gap that could be addressed by educating these users on the term and its relevance (see Fig.1).



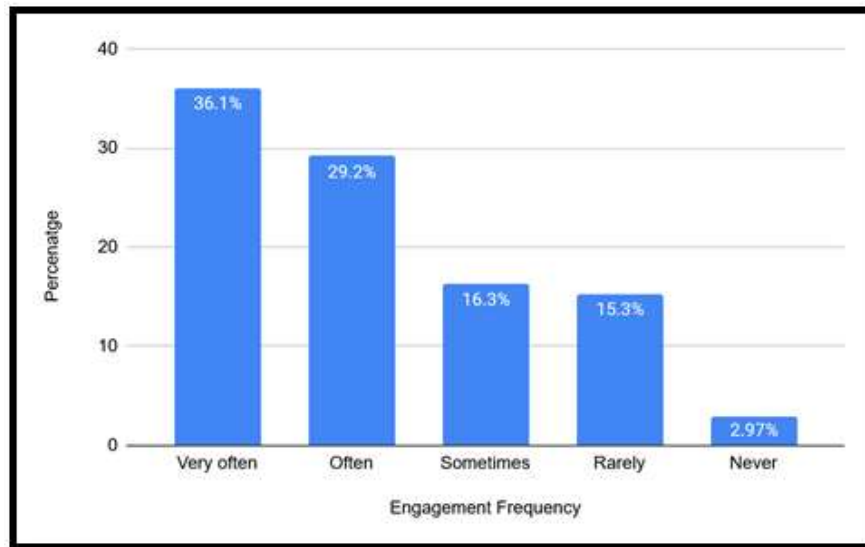
**Fig.1: Graphical Representation of Ephemeral Content Awareness.**

### 4.1.4 Frequency of engagement with ephemeral content

The data provides insights into how respondents engage with ephemeral content, categorizing interactions into five levels: Very Often, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never. A significant portion, 36.1% (n=73), engages "Very Often," indicating seamless integration into daily routines. Another 29.2% (n=59) engage "Often," and 16.3% (n=33) "Sometimes," showcasing moderate involvement.

The "Rarely" engaged segment, at 15.3% (n=31), suggests a preference for more permanent content, presenting an opportunity for tailored strategies. A small fraction, 2.97% (n=6), "Never" engages, highlighting a need for educational content to introduce the value and relevance of ephemeral formats. Overall, ephemeral content plays a significant role in capturing user attention. For brands, the challenge lies in leveraging its fleeting nature to create urgency and drive engagement. Rare and non-engagers represent untapped potential for targeted awareness and connection strategies. Notably, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a prominent motivator for impulsive buying, indicating ephemeral content can elicit psychological responses like urgency and exclusion anxiety (see Fig. 2). This alignment supports the hypothesis: **Hypothesis H2: There is a significant relationship between the consumption of ephemeral content and the level of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) experienced by the audience is accepted.** (see, Fig: 2)

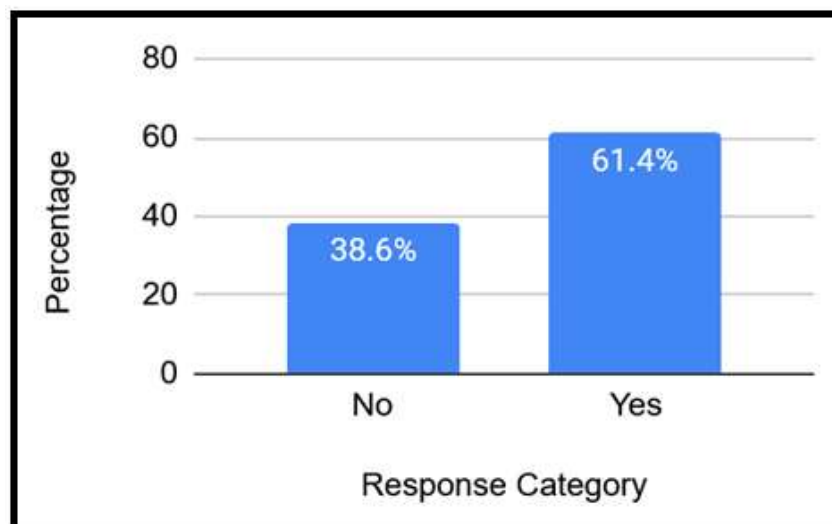




**Fig. 2: Graphical representation of frequency of engagement.**

#### 4.1.5 Target audience response to impulse buying and short-term marketing

The data reveals a notable split in consumer responses to impulse purchases driven by temporary social media ads or limited-time offers. Approximately 61% (n=124) of respondents reported making impulsive purchases, highlighting the strong influence of ephemeral content and urgency-driven marketing. Conversely, 39% (n=79) stated they did not, indicating a more discerning consumer segment. This underscores the real-time effectiveness of these marketing tactics in driving unplanned buying. However, the substantial portion of unaffected consumers suggests the need for a balanced approach that combines impulsive triggers with value-driven content to engage more cautious shoppers (*see Fig. 3*).



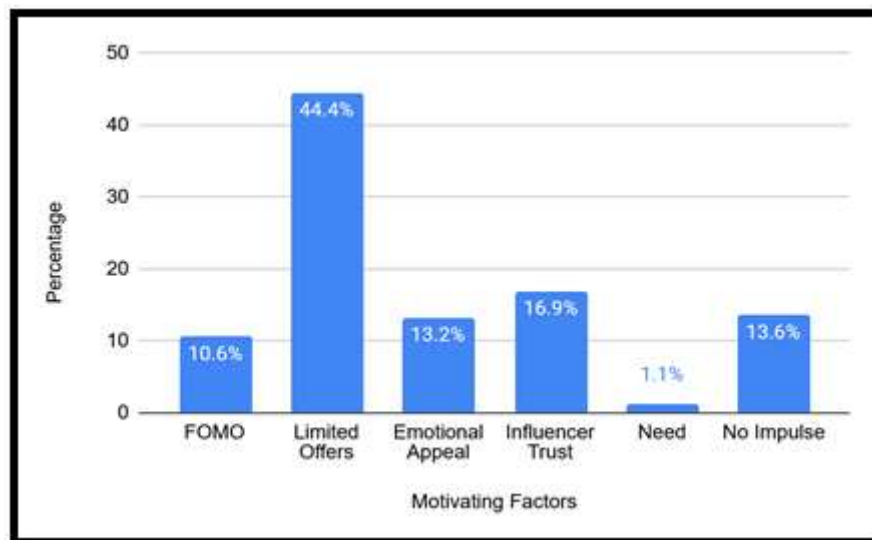
**Fig. 3: Graphical Representation of Impulsive Buying.**

#### 4.1.6 Key motivating factors affecting impulsive buying decisions

The analysis of 272 responses highlights key motivating factors for impulsive purchasing. Limited Offers emerged as the most prominent factor, at 44.49% (n=121), underscoring the significant role of time-

sensitive promotions. This was followed by Influencer Trust at 16.91% (n=46) and Emotional Appeal at 13.24% (n=46). FOMO accounted for 10.66% (n=29), demonstrating the psychological impact of scarcity. A segment of consumers (13.6%, n=36) reported no impulse purchases. The factor "Need" was minimal at 1.1% (n=1), emphasizing that external influences predominantly drive impulsive buying.

The data affirms that flash sales, by leveraging urgency and scarcity common in ephemeral content, effectively convert engagement into immediate consumer action. **Hence, hypothesis H3: there is a significant relationship between engagement with flash sales and the tendency for impulsive purchases among consumers is accepted.** (see Fig. 4)



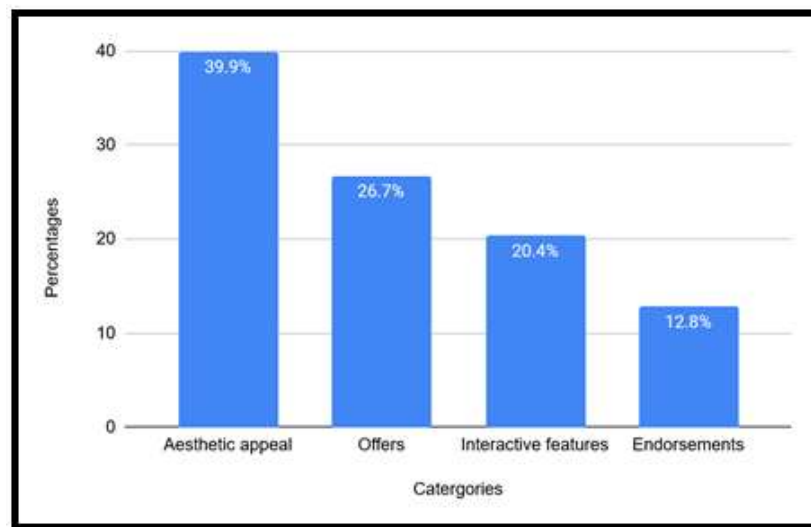
**Fig.4 Graphical Representation of the impulsive key motivating factors efforts on the impulsive buying decision.**

**Note:** Since the above percentages are calculated for the total number of respondents to the total number of responses, the total percentage would be more than 100%

#### 4.1.7 Influencing factors behind user interaction with ephemeral content and social media content.

This data, based on 318 responses, highlights key elements influencing user engagement with ephemeral brand content. Aesthetic appeal is the most influential factor, making up 39.94% (n=127), underscoring the critical role of strong visual design. Offers, including personalized promotions and limited-time deals, account for 26.73% (n=85), suggesting users are significantly motivated by value-based incentives. Interactive features such as polls and Q&As contribute 20.44% (n=65), pointing to the importance of active user participation in increasing retention and brand connection. Lastly, endorsements by influencers or celebrities account for 12.89% (n=41), indicating their impact is less dominant compared to visual appeal and offers.

Overall, a blend of visual appeal, value-driven messaging, and interactive engagement is most compelling for ephemeral content. Brands should prioritize high-quality visuals, timely offers, and interactive features, with influencer marketing acting as a supportive strategy. These findings reflect effective engagement tactics and highlight strategic ways ephemeral content can enhance visibility and emotional connection. **Hence, hypothesis H1: There is a significant relationship between the use of ephemeral content and growth in brand visibility and audience engagement.** (see Fig.: 5)



**Fig. 5: Graphical representation of factors affecting the target audience's interaction.**

**Note:** Since the above percentages are calculated for the total number of respondents to the total number of responses, the total percentage would be more than 100%

#### 4.1.8 Short-lived content like stories can play a significant role in building lasting customer relationships by offering authentic, real-time engagement.

Based on data from 202 respondents, 38.1% (n=77) believe short-lived content, like Instagram Stories, helps build lasting customer relationships. It's thought that the temporary, time-sensitive nature of these formats fosters urgency, authenticity, and exclusive access, which keeps brands emotionally engaging and top of mind. One of the respondents stated:

“Yes, short-lived contents play a significant role in building lasting relationships with customers. While ephemeral content disappears after a short period, its temporary nature creates a sense of urgency and exclusivity, encouraging users to engage with the brand more frequently.”

This reflects the broader view that real-time and behind-the-scenes content humanizes the brand, creating familiarity and reinforcing trust through repeated touchpoints.

In contrast, 28.7%(n=58) of respondents expressed skepticism or disagreement. They argued that while Stories may help with initial impressions or impulse purchases, they rarely establish deep or lasting loyalty. A respondent commented:

“Just the story – No. Stories may push for a first-time buying of a cool-looking T-shirt with a Batman reference, but the quality will make me decide whether I will have a long-lasting relationship or not.”

This reflects a common belief that product quality, service experience, and brand reliability are the true drivers of long-term consumer retention, rather than temporary social media posts.

The remaining 33.2% (n=67) offered neutral or conditional views, acknowledging that the effectiveness of ephemeral content depends on several factors, such as how well the brand executes its storytelling, the relevance of the content to its audience, and the overall consistency of its messaging. As one respondent put it:

“According to me, it will not build lasting relationships with customers, but it will help in brand awareness.”

While ephemeral content (like Stories) boosts brand visibility and engagement, its role in driving loyalty is nuanced. Of 202 respondents, 38.1% see it as a relationship-building tool, 28.7% find it insufficient alone, and 33.2% view it as context-dependent. Long-term relationships depend on consistent quality and strategic brand interactions.

Analysis of consumer behavior across age groups revealed younger audiences (18-34) are more active with ephemeral content. Over half (52.5%) frequently engage, and 61% make impulse purchases from time-limited ads, primarily driven by limited-time offers, influencer trust, emotional appeal, and FOMO. However, trust and authenticity responses were mixed; 69.3% were neutral on trusting brands using it, and only 27% found it made brands seem more authentic. Common impulse buys are visual and trend-driven items like clothing and beauty products. Behind-the-scenes content humanizes brands. Ultimately, while only 38.1% believe ephemeral content builds long-term relationships, it remains a powerful tool for capturing attention and encouraging quick actions.

## 4.2 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW ANALYSIS:

Ephemeral content has become crucial in brand communication, leveraging psychological triggers like FOMO and scarcity through platforms like Instagram and Snapchat Stories. This format requires lower effort and investment than permanent posts, enabling brands to produce quick, authentic, and spontaneous content. Features like polls, Q&As, and flash sales foster exclusivity and real-time engagement. Consequently, more brands are adopting ephemeral content to create emotionally resonant consumer experiences.

This chapter further analyzes qualitative data from in-depth interviews with digital marketing, social media, and brand communication professionals.

1. To analyze how an ephemeral content marketing strategy acts as a catalyst for the brand.
2. To examine how brands utilize ephemeral content marketing to create a sense of fear of missing out (FOMO).
3. To examine the impact of ephemeral content on consumer purchasing behaviour toward brands.

Participants were selected based on their expertise in social media marketing and digital marketing. The insights derived from these interviews were analyzed to uncover patterns in the practical use, perceived value, and behavioural impact of ephemeral content in branding.

### 4.2.1 Ephemeral content acts as a catalyst for a brand's reach and recognition

Digital marketing professionals emphasize the pivotal role of ephemeral content in brand strategies.

*Sarthak Sharma (Organic by MSL)* highlights stories as crucial for retaining existing audiences through "snackable content" and consistent visibility. He notes their low-effort creation allows for daily, relatable engagement, even through simple text or "ask me anything" formats.

*Tuba Faheem (Ogilvy)* describes ephemeral content as fast-reaching and easy to consume, ideal for increasing brand touchpoints in high-frequency categories like beauty. She states it allows for unlimited uploads without strict visual maintenance, maintaining visibility and boosting overall engagement.

*Samadrita De (Green Reef Pvt. Ltd.)* sees ephemeral content as giving brands "structure, character, and humaniz[ation]," preventing them from feeling mechanical. She notes a significant 30-40% increase in traffic, leading to urgency, website visits, and quick sales. This content is especially useful for small businesses and quick commerce for instant boosts, but it "only works effectively when a brand already has trust."

*Diya Bhansali (Hosteller)* calls ephemeral content the "heartbeat of any brand," emphasizing its immediacy and authenticity in humanizing brands. She reported a substantial increase from 1,000 to 7,000-10,000 average story views, contributing 55-65% of daily engagement since implementing a "story calendar."

*Ananya Srivastava (AmberStudent)* states ephemeral content is "baked into every campaign" for visibility, consistency, and driving traffic/queries through clickable links. She noted a 35% increase in DM interactions via stories, highlighting its ability to generate urgency and drive quicker decisions or sales.

*Saurav Kumar (Beeida)* describes ephemeral content as a "short-lived format that creates urgency and a sense of immediacy," ensuring quick attention and visibility. He emphasizes its ability to trigger FOMO, driving immediate action through limited-time offers and behind-the-scenes content.

*Pradeep Vishwakarma (Publicis Global Delivery)* believes ephemeral content subtly creates FOMO in Gen Z and millennials, nudging them towards quick purchases and allowing brands to leverage consumer behavior for maximum ROI.

*Aryamitra Mondal (Brewitty)* deems ephemeral content "critical," stating that "If you're not doing ephemeral content, you're not even on the radar." She highlights its role in visibility, engagement, and brand recall, and its cost-effectiveness in building community and fostering interaction for both short-term traction and long-term loyalty.

*Hrish Singh Mehta (Cricketackr)* finds ephemeral content essential in fast-paced industries like sports media for real-time updates, trust, and credibility, emphasizing the need for speed and accuracy while maintaining visibility.

*Rohan Manjhi (Maptodigital)* explains that stories "pop up right at the top of the app," leading to higher interaction and direct queries, making brands feel more human and providing valuable performance data. He highlights its power for visibility and consumer connection through real-time interaction and tracking. Overall, industry specialists view ephemeral content as a core element of modern digital marketing across sectors. Its strength lies in immediacy, relatability, and creating urgency through FOMO. These transient formats, from flash sales to polls, enable brands to stay in the limelight, boost visibility, and encourage real-time interaction. When used thoughtfully, ephemeral content builds an enduring emotional connection and a sense of belonging, extending beyond its 24-hour lifespan. The qualitative findings strongly indicate a correlation between strategic ephemeral content use and enhanced brand visibility and audience engagement. Hence, **hypothesis H1: There is a significant relationship between the use of ephemeral content and growth in brand visibility and audience engagement is accepted.**

#### 4.2.2 Ephemeral stories and the art of creating FOMO

Ephemeral content excels at creating urgency and driving impulsive buying by leveraging FOMO and scarcity.

*Sarthak Sharma (Organic by MSL)* notes that surprising, visually appealing story ads (dark posts) are highly effective in triggering FOMO, especially in quick commerce like fashion or food. However, FOMO's effectiveness varies by industry; it's less impactful for considered purchases like domain hosting. The outcome depends on product category, audience, and creative framing.

*Tuba Faheem (Ogilvy)* affirms stories' FOMO-generating power due to their 24-hour lifespan. This urgency is potent for event promotions or exclusive updates, particularly when content isn't archived in highlights, compelling users to stay alert and engaged. Strong visuals, countdowns, and limited-time offers amplify this effect, building anticipation.

*Samadrita De (Green Reef Pvt. Ltd.)* believes ephemeral content is fundamentally designed for FOMO,



with brands exploiting this through flash sales and exclusive previews. This is particularly effective in India's quick commerce landscape for accessible price-point products (under ₹1500–₹2000), though less so for high-ticket items. Trust and clarity are crucial for FOMO-driven content to resonate.

*Diya Bhansali (Hosteller)* states that ephemeral content powerfully creates FOMO for experience-driven brands like travel. Well-crafted content, even without a hard sell, taps into curiosity and urgency, driving quick decisions. She asserts that "most things on the internet right now are driven by FOMO."

*Ananya Srivastava (AmberStudent)* highlights that stories inherently create FOMO, especially with real-time updates like "Only 5 left in stock" or tagged products. The 24-hour nature encourages faster decisions across categories, with behind-the-scenes content and limited-time badges amplifying urgency.

*Saurav Kumar (Beeida)* uses time-sensitive visibility and emotional triggers to create FOMO, employing countdowns and scarcity phrases. He cites successful campaigns in fashion and e-commerce where urgency drove significant traffic and immediate responses, working across industries.

Rohan Manjhi (Maptodigital) notes that consistent stories and behind-the-scenes content create last-minute boosts and urgency, especially with limited-time or exclusive offers.

*Aryamitra Mondal (Brewitty)* affirms ephemeral content's design for FOMO, though she stresses its broader potential. Genuine FOMO requires unique, time-sensitive offers exclusive to stories. Content must be "not ignorable," giving users a reason to click through curiosity or a fear of missing out on exclusive interactions.

*Pradeep Vishwakarma (Publicis Global Delivery)* confirms that ephemeral content is a "limited-time tactic designed to create buzz" and trigger impulsive purchases through FOMO.

*Hrish Singh Mehta (Crickettack)* emphasizes FOMO in real-time, event-driven sectors like sports, where immediate updates on major events (e.g., a century in cricket) draw in viewers fearing they're missing out. This is situational and timing-based, with interactive polls during live matches also boosting engagement and return visits.

Overall, story-based ephemeral content is highly effective in generating FOMO, driving rapid action, and encouraging impulsive purchases. Its urgency and scarcity leverage psychological triggers. Industries like travel, hospitality, quick commerce, sports, and beauty use stories for limited-time offers, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and buzz generation. The effectiveness relies on timing, exclusivity, and emotional relevance, making it both a marketing tool and a means of emotional connection. Strategic use of ephemeral content significantly amplifies FOMO, driving urgency, impulsive engagement, and deeper brand interaction. Hence, **hypothesis H2: There is a significant relationship between the consumption of ephemeral content and the level of FOMO experienced by the audience is accepted.**

#### 4.2.3 Most effective short-lived content formats that influence buying decisions.

##### Influencing Buying Decisions

Experts agree that ephemeral content's effectiveness in driving purchases depends on brand ethos, product category, and message clarity. Flash sales and urgent story ads (dark posts) excel in quick commerce (fashion, food) due to their surprise and visual appeal, triggering impulse buys. Simple, "snackable" formats like countdowns and polls are most effective. Product teasers and behind-the-scenes (BTS) clips are highly impactful, building anticipation and humanizing brands. Giveaways and user-generated content (UGC) also drive engagement, especially in experience-driven sectors. Ultimately, a blend of urgency, authenticity, and visual appeal is key.

##### Reach Across Industries

While initially strong in fashion, beauty, and quick commerce, ephemeral content is expanding its reach



universally. Its impact is highest in lower-price-point, quick-buying-cycle industries. However, professionals emphasize its adaptability across sectors, from education to B2B, provided the content is strategically relevant and aligns with audience intent, rather than solely relying on impulse. Timing is crucial, especially in real-time sectors like sports media.

#### Assessing ROI

ROI for ephemeral content is assessed through a blend of analytics and engagement metrics, including reach, impressions, link clicks, story taps, swipe-ups, and website traffic. Experts observe that ephemeral formats, particularly stories, consistently outperform static posts in visibility and interaction. While direct ROI can be challenging without paid promotion, it's highly effective for audience retention, brand awareness, and sparking immediate conversions. In real-time contexts, live views and interactive polls are key indicators.

#### 4.2.4 Ephemeral Content's Reach Across Industries

Experts agree that while ephemeral content originated and excels in fashion, beauty, and quick commerce due to their visual nature and impulse-driven purchases, its relevance is steadily expanding across diverse industries.

*Tuba Faheem (Ogilvy)* highlights strong results in visual and real-time sectors but notes its increasing effectiveness universally. *Sarthak Sharma (Organic by MSL)* and *Samadrita De (Green Reef Pvt. Ltd.)* emphasize its strong impact in quick commerce and low-price-point sectors, where immediate purchases are common, contrasting this with research-intensive or high-investment industries where it's less effective for direct sales.

However, *Diya Bhansali (Hosteller)* stresses the importance of unique, engaging storytelling for experience-driven sectors like hospitality, moving beyond just flash sales. *Ananya Srivastava (AmberStudent)* finds it valuable for brand consistency and engagement, even if not directly revenue-generating for service brands.

*Saurav Kumar (Beeida)* and *Aryamitra Mondal (Brewitty)* assert that ephemeral content is now a widely adopted, effective strategy across all industries, including education, e-commerce, and B2B, if used strategically and aligned with content intent. *Harish Singh Mehta (Crickettack)* highlights its critical role in real-time industries like sports media, where timing and immediate audience sentiment are paramount. *Pradeep Vishwakarma (Publicis Global Delivery)* reinforces its effectiveness for low-ticket items, while *Rohan Manjhi (Maptodigital)* sees its long-term value for tech and B2B brands in building brand recall and consistent communication.

Moreover, ephemeral content is a powerful and adaptable digital marketing strategy. While thriving on immediacy and visual appeal in fast-moving consumer sectors, its relevance has grown across education, hospitality, B2B services, and sports media. Its success hinges on strategic adaptation to industry nuances, audience behavior, and timely, relevant content delivery.

Ephemeral content drives impulse buying by creating urgency, emotional appeal, and visual impact. Experts across industries note that stories, flash sales, and real-time updates prompt quick decisions, especially in fashion, beauty, food, and sports. When used strategically, it's a powerful tool to boost spontaneous purchases.

### 4.3 FINDINGS

- Qualitative analysis supports Hypothesis 1, showing that ephemeral content boosts brand visibility and audience engagement. Interviews with Diya Bhansali and Tuba Faheem reveal that tools like story

calendars and interactive features (polls, Q&As) significantly increase views and participation. Ephemeral formats enable ongoing, non-intrusive communication, making them key for maintaining brand presence and building stronger consumer connections.

- Qualitative findings support Hypothesis 2, confirming that ephemeral content heightens FOMO and drives quick audience responses. Experts like Sarthak Sharma and Tuba Faheem note that the 24-hour limit and exclusive visuals create urgency, prompting users to act fast. Formats like flash sales, teasers, and behind-the-scenes clips boost engagement, emotional connection, and rapid conversions, especially in fast-moving sectors like fashion and food delivery.
- Quantitative findings confirm Hypothesis 2: ephemeral content triggers urgency and FOMO, driving higher engagement and impulsive buying. Users showed strong responses to time-limited offers and interactive stories, especially those labeled “last chance” or “24 hours only.” This emotional urgency leads to quick decisions and increased brand interaction, proving that ephemeral content actively influences consumer behavior.
- Behind-the-scenes and ephemeral content elicits considerable engagement from consumers; however, trust in brands utilizing such content remains uncertain. A majority of respondents (69.3%) indicated a neutral stance regarding their trust in brands employing ephemeral formats, with only 20.7% expressing affirmative trust.
- Additionally, ephemeral content often promotes flash sales, which act as a direct stimulus for impulsive purchases (H3) and also play a crucial role in shaping purchase intention, the internal decision to consider buying a product. This intention eventually translates into a purchase decision, completing the consumer journey.

This study reveals ephemeral content, especially Instagram Stories, as a central strategic communication tool in digital marketing. It demonstrates how these formats enhance brand visibility, audience engagement, and impulsive buying by generating FOMO. Short-lived content, like flash sales and limited-time offers, creates urgency, prompting immediate consumer action. Survey data shows 52.5% of respondents frequently engage with short-lived content, and 61% have made impulse purchases influenced by story-based ads. Limited-time offers are the primary driver of this behavior, and behind-the-scenes (BTS) content (81% reported feeling more connected) effectively humanizes brands, fostering authenticity.

While initially prevalent in fashion and beauty, ephemeral content is now widely adopted across diverse industries, from education to sports media, for both short-term conversions and consistent brand awareness. It offers a flexible, low-effort way to maintain daily visibility. However, the study notes a limitation: ephemeral content alone doesn't guarantee trust or long-term loyalty, with 69.3% of respondents remaining neutral on brand credibility. This suggests a need for deliberate storytelling alongside fleeting content to build lasting consumer relationships. Future research could explore its longitudinal impact on brand equity and optimal content combinations for engagement. Ephemeral content is becoming a necessary adaptation to modern digital consumer behavior.

#### 4.5 LIMITATION

This study provides valuable insights into ephemeral content's role in digital marketing, but its limitations should be noted. The primary sample of young adults (18-24) restricts generalizability to older demographics. Due to time constraints, only 10 in-depth interviews were conducted, limiting qualitative breadth. The cross-sectional design doesn't capture long-term impacts on brand loyalty, and ROI was

measured using lower-funnel metrics (e.g., swipe-ups, views) rather than broader outcomes like brand positioning. The research's focus on Instagram users means findings might not fully apply to other platforms like WhatsApp or Snapchat. The evolving nature of social media algorithms also introduces variability in content visibility, potentially affecting consistency.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable observations: ephemeral content, particularly on Instagram, is strongly linked to urgency, impulsive behavior, and increased brand visibility. It also highlights the growing use of ephemeral strategies beyond just fashion and beauty.

While this study shows ephemeral content influences consumer behavior and brand building through FOMO and urgency, future research has much to uncover. More detailed studies could explore the unique impact of various ephemeral formats (like live videos or BTS) on user perception and purchase intent, helping refine marketing strategies. It would also be beneficial to expand the demographic scope beyond upper-middle-class Gen Z, including wider age ranges and socioeconomic backgrounds, to understand diverse consumption patterns. Longitudinal research is needed to grasp the psychological effects of sustained ephemeral media engagement, such as shifts in trust and loyalty over time. Investigating cross-industry applications in sectors like education or public health could reveal specific challenges and opportunities. Finally, future studies should examine how brands use advanced analytics to optimize campaigns, developing more robust KPIs that go beyond simple views and likes to gauge genuine engagement and long-term value. Ultimately, continued examination of ephemeral content, a significant cultural phenomenon, is vital to fully understand its role in shaping digital brand connections.

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