

ENHANCING CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CONTENT MARKETING

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Abstract In today's landscape, where content pervades every aspect of our lives and connectivity is ubiquitous, reaching the audience directly has become more attainable. However, this convenience comes at the cost of heightened efforts from businesses to captivate consumers. The digital realm has ushered in novel business prospects, with the amalgamation of various industries giving rise to a fresh market mindset centered around the platform economy. Adapting business strategies, particularly in the face of a pandemic, has evolved into a vital survival imperative, prompting companies to seek innovative solutions to navigate the challenges posed by new realities. The surging popularity of content marketing is no happenstance, as evidenced by numerous institutional studies delving into marketing trends. Creating and sharing content aligned with consumer interests and cultivating relationships through it presents an invaluable opportunity. Disregarding digitization processes is synonymous with being outdated. This article endeavors to spotlight the advantages of employing content marketing as a strategic tool for business success. At its core, the pursuit of a meaningful connection with the audience through compelling content lies at the heart of the gig economy, responding to evolving consumer habits and steering new market dynamics.

Keywords: content marketing; circular thinking; engagement; brand value

Introduction

The role of content marketing is steadily growing, as it plays a crucial role in cultivating consumer affinity for a brand through enhanced engagement and the establishment of trust. Crafting valuable content that relates to the brand facilitates user interaction, enabling companies to forge strong connections with their target audience (Hollebeek, Digital Content Marketing's Role in Fostering Consumer Engagement, Trust, and Value: Framework, Fundamental Propositions, and Implications, 2019). This process fosters meaningful relationships and

identification, ultimately encouraging desired consumer behavior. Content marketing possesses a holistic nature, not confined to a specific form but rather expressed through a compilation of various forms. Its primary objective is to generate value for the customer. Content marketing serves as a vital tool in elevating consumer awareness and is defined as a "management process for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying the customer through digital content" (VENEREAN, 2017). The focus of content marketing lies in enhancing the consumer's perception of the brand by delivering additional information that aligns with their interests. Content marketing is perceived as a means of communication with consumers, with its emphasis not solely on sales but on capturing attention, fostering commitment, and, consequently, instilling trust in customers (Alvarez-Monzoncillo, 2022).

Analysis and Discussion

The IT sector has given a new direction for the development of a technology-oriented society that has a direct impact on every area of life (Chalfoun, 2018). The new conditions require new approaches. It is no coincidence that, as early as 1999, Kotler envisioned appealing to retailers that they needed to drastically rethink their strategies and create value for customers as a result of the process of digital business transformation. (Kotler, 1999, p. 206).

In order to make diversity and inclusion a reality, companies must continue to adjust their marketing strategies to stay competitive and abreast of the latest trends and technologies." (Bryant, 2023). Increasing importance is given to techniques that create value for the customer, and the focus is not on sales themselves but on engaging the audience. Consumers like the brand only when they see the company's efforts subordinate to their interests. The energy of the brand shapes consumer preferences, but in order to generate this energy, the company must know its audience well in order to be able to channel its content properly. (Holt, 2002)The buyer's persona must be well profiled, and this will help optimize the company's resources. Working in this direction also requires distinguishing the content from that of competitors. It is important to prioritize topics that are relevant to both the company and its business goals. Therefore, it is necessary to find the painful points of the audience and which terms need to be used in the search. In the beginning, content marketing was understood as the approach applied by companies to creating and distributing educational and captivating content in various media formats in order to attract and retain customers. (Mansueto, 2021). This definition has already been supplemented and emphasizes the strategic aspect of the concept.

“Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience—and, ultimately, to drive customer action” (VINEREAN, 2017). The benefits of content marketing for creating brand value are undeniable. As such, the following can be mentioned: increasing traffic to the company's web-based resources, using the power of viral marketing to link users to the brand, increasing consumer loyalty, improving site optimization, and more. (Gümüş, 2017) The advantage of content marketing is that it creates a more engaged audience with minimal marketing costs. Creating content is a challenge. According to Dennis Shiao, the model describes a situation in which, if the company is not satisfied with the results achieved, it is necessary to return to the appropriate category (Shiao, 2020). Looking at the perspective, assumptions, and actions, it is possible to achieve better results. It does not matter if the company has good intentions if they lead to a bad user experience. The solution to this problem lies in providing the consumer with the content offered. Yes, this is possible if the general image of users is clear, and they would quickly find a solution and answer in the proposed content. When the buyer persona is complex, it is necessary to offer a card to the users, which will take them to the right place for them. That is why it is necessary not only to make assumptions but also to look in perspective, and on the basis of this, to send the correct content. Building content is not a one-time act but requires time and adaptation to the results obtained. If they do not satisfy the company, it is necessary to define a new action, implement it, and compare the performance with the previous measurements. Testing is done in real-time, and the most appropriate content design is sought. (Fadwa, 2018)

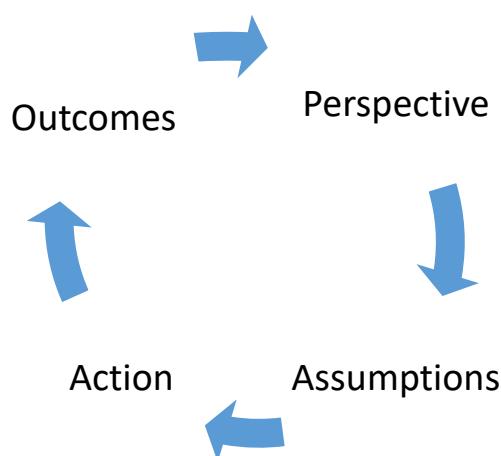


Figure 1: Circular Thinking (Source: Shiao, D. (2020) Why Circular Thinking Works Better in Content Marketing)

Content marketing is grounded in a sincere intention to provide value to users, facilitating the attraction and retention of customers (Wong, 2015). It serves as a tool to enhance brand awareness, commitment, and trust, not only converting leads into customers but also cultivating them into potential brand ambassadors in the future. Ultimately, content serves as the conduit that prompts users to read, learn, see, or experience, forging a connection between the brand and the hearts and minds of prospects, leads, and customers (Urbaniak, 2023).

Recognizing the advantages of content marketing is pivotal in formulating a consumer-centric approach. The focus revolves around three key areas: 1) brand-related objectives; 2) consumer-related goals; and 3) communication-related goals (Maintz, 2019). This article concentrates on examining how content marketing contributes to the augmentation of brand value by delivering value to consumers through effective communication. These interconnected goals work synergistically to generate financial benefits for the company.

Employing diverse content formats such as text, images, infographics, and brand storytelling, companies aim to capture and sustain the audience's attention, fostering long-term engagement, trust, and relationships. The primary motivation for users to engage in content marketing lies in the importance of the content and the benefits they derive from it (Plessis, 2022). Communication in this context denotes the interaction with the brand stemming from engagement with content marketing. This interaction forms psychological connections with the brand, and engagement is marked by cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses that shape the consumer journey (Hollebeek, Exploring customer brand engagement: Definition and themes, 2011).

Brand communication is not limited to overt engagement behaviors or the consumption and creation of online content by customers. It also encompasses subtle communicative elements, gauged through customer behavior and their relationship with brands. The ultimate goal is to achieve utility by sharing knowledge that solves problems and ensuring that content addresses topics that trigger continuous information searches and customer engagement.

Modern consumers, who make informed decisions, seek information beyond corporate websites. They explore novelties, industry trends, and solutions to problems and participate in specialized forums. Building brand value plays a crucial role in supporting their choices and guiding them through their consumer journey (see Figure 2).

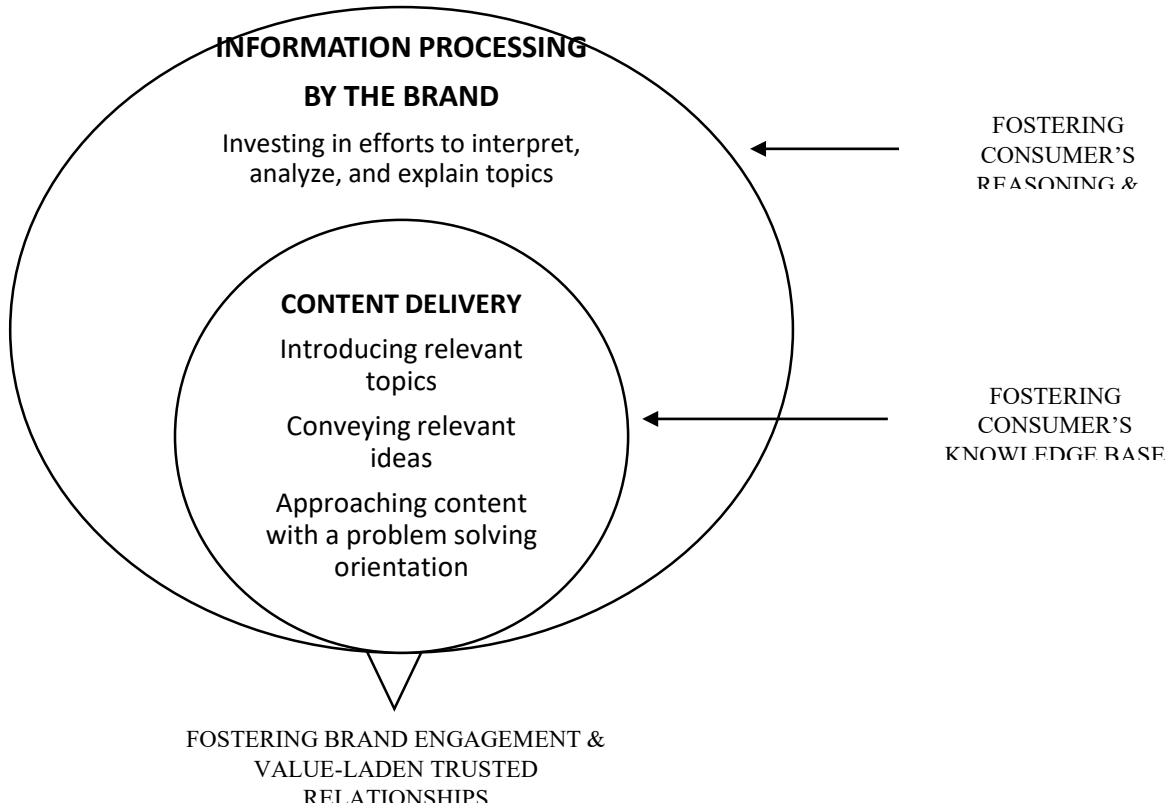
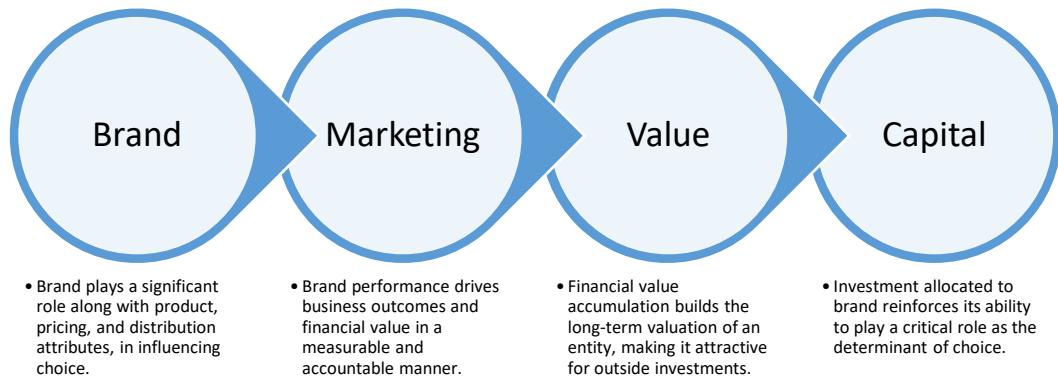


Figure 2: Dual Roles of a Branding Digital Content Marketing Helpfulness (Source: Taiminen, K., Ranaweera, C. (2019). Fostering brand engagement and Value-Laden trusted B2B relationships through digital content marketing)

Engaging in content marketing entails various information processing costs, including interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating topics to ascertain the perceived utility of the content. The ability to make informed decisions regarding content is closely linked to customer feedback and the pursuit of optimization in the overall process. Consumers highly value knowledge sharing, seeing it as a manifestation of the company's commitment to delivering value. The quest for utility and the establishment of a system that fosters this utility are crucial, prompting continuous monitoring (Koob, 2021). This system observes and predicts the dynamics of the organization's overall environment and its impact on relationships, incorporating both a rational response to problems and strategic planning.

The creation of utility for consumers is intrinsically tied to the generation of value for the brand through content marketing. While product promotion is pivotal, it should be integrated into

the broader effort of constructing and enhancing brand value—a process akin to building a value chain (Chalfoun1, 2017). Technologies, including search engines and their algorithms, constantly evolve, necessitating corresponding adjustments in companies' digital strategies (Jiang, 2021). A study reveals that B2B and B2C businesses employ content marketing to enhance their brand presence in the online environment highlight the indispensability of content marketing for brand promotion (Stahl, 2021). Figure 3 illustrates the schema for constructing brand value, highlighting the evident impact of brand value on a company's financial outcomes (Gupta, 2021). The interconnected components emphasize the need for companies to reinvest in brand promotion and value building, a cycle that ultimately generates increased revenue for the company. (Dipanjan Chatterjee, 2019).



*Figure 3: The Value of a Brand (Source: Chatterjee, D. (2019). *A Pragmatic Guide To Brand Value*.)*

The concepts of brand value and brand equity address the same issue, where the value of the brand determines its equity. Brand equity encompasses everything that reflects people's attitudes toward a company's products. As articulated by Dholakia (2019), the higher the favorability towards the brand, the greater its brand equity and, consequently, its value. This concept is intertwined with others, such as consumer loyalty and advocacy. The creation of loyalty encourages consumers to recommend a specific brand. Compelling content is essential for engaging consumers, contributing to an enhanced brand experience, and facilitating successful product positioning. Recognizing the pivotal role of consumers, the content needs to be customer-centric, involving them in the company's strategy. Aligning content with customer interests fosters empathy with the brand's history. (Hong, 2020)

Dholakia proposes three strategies for building brand value: (Dholakiya, 2019)

1. Share the brand's history, mission, and values in an appropriate and creative manner.
2. Build trust and loyalty through content, utilizing blogs as a means to invest effort and time in providing free, useful information, such as video tutorials, infographics, and engaging social media posts. Creating beneficial content for customers is crucial for cultivating their affinity and laying the groundwork for long-term relationships.
3. Establish thought leadership by positioning the content publisher as an authority on relevant topics, demonstrating originality and creativity. It is not just about identifying consumer pain points but also presenting innovative solutions.

Conclusion

Content creation serves as a means of constructing a company identity, necessitating a thorough understanding of customers' challenges. Meaningful content, recognized as valuable and compelling by customers, contributes to the establishment and reinforcement of a distinctive company identity.

In conclusion, content marketing proves to be a highly effective strategy for the promotion of products, services, or ideas. The continual pursuit of innovative approaches to reach customers and deliver content aligned with their interests is evident in the evolving landscape of web analytics tools. These tools empower companies to assess the efficacy of content marketing and its impact on enhancing brand value. The key to successful content lies in its ability to captivate and engage readers and viewers. To achieve this, companies must adopt a customer-centric perspective, focusing on what their audience wants to hear and read rather than solely promoting their brand.

Traditional advertising forms, such as sponsored posts and branded content, are no longer as effective. Instead, providing free, relevant content tailored to the audience's interests emerges as a powerful method to attract and retain customers. This approach builds trust and progressively guides the consumer through their journey, creating a positive and potentially exciting user experience. Bill Gates' statement in 1996, "Content is King," remains pertinent, highlighting the enduring value of content, both on the internet and in broadcasting (Evans, 2017).

In essence, the landscape of brand promotion is evolving, and companies must adapt by prioritizing customer needs and delivering engaging, valuable content. The provided references offer additional insights into the pragmatic aspects of brand value and the contribution of great content to building brand equity.