IMPACT OF DIGITAL CONTENT MARKETING ON BRAND PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to determine the impact digital content marketing has on creating brand awareness and hence sales and customer loyalty. To achieve these objectives, a focus group interview was conducted that helped to formulate the theoretical framework. The variables in the framework were then tested through a questionnaire for which 62 responses were generated. The responses show that there is a positive relationship between the two digital content marketing tools, namely social content and video/pictorial content, and brand awareness, product sales and customer loyalty. Specifically, video and pictorial content plays an important role in creating brand awareness while sales and customer loyalty are effected more by social content.

Table of Content

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

Digital content marketing is the new face of marketing in the 21st century. As internet has become a part of our daily lives, we see a shift in the marketing trend as well. The rise of social media has totally changed the way businesses market themselves. Marketing is now much more than advertising on traditional media like television, radio, newspapers and magazines. Digital platforms are creating potential for brands to communicate with customers and to promote themselves using nontraditional methodologies.

Content is the information a company wishes to share with its customers. This information is carefully designed such that it is valuable to the customer. When we talk about social content, it is essentially the valuable information a company communicates to its potential customers through different social media platforms.

Brand awareness is the degree or the extent to which customers identify and recognize a brand. Building brand awareness is extremely important for a new brand and is given the highest importance by companies when launching a product in the market. Digital content marketing is used as a popular tool to create brand awareness not only by new brands but also by established ones.

The ultimate aim of every company is to generate sales and have a loyal customer base. Creating brand awareness is the first step in this process. Hence it can be correctly said that all the marketing efforts of a company eventually aim for increase in sales and number of customers. Hence digital content marketing aims to connect with the customer of today through platforms like social networks and blogs, to increase their sales and hence number of loyal customers.

This study has been structured to determine how social media channels can be used as important tools in digital content marketing. Social media channels include the use of social networks (facebook,twitter,LinkedIn), the use of branded entertainment i.e. video and pictorial content sharing on Youtube and social networks, and the use of blogs. In this study we will focus on the use of social networks and video/pictorial content. This research will analyze and test the impact

of use of social networks and video/pictorial content on brand awareness, sales and customer loyalty.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study intends to investigate the role of social media in digital content marketing to create brand awareness, to increase sales and to increase customer loyalty. Particularly, the use of social networks to generate valuable content and the use of video/pictorial content will be analyzed.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What is the effect of social content on brand awareness?

2. What is the effect of social content on sales?

3. What is the effect of social content on customer loyalty?

4. What is the effect of video/pictorial content on brand awareness?

5. What is the effect of video/pictorial content on sales?

6. What is the effect of video/pictorial content on customer loyalty?

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMWEORK

1.4.1 INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

The first independent variable is social networking. By social networking, we essentially mean the social content that is shared on different social media platforms. Companies today use a lot of social content to connect with the customers. Companies create their social media profiles which they update on a regular basis to keep the customers informed of their activities. Different campaigns are launched on a periodic basis to attract customer attention.

The second independent variable is video/pictorial content. Marketing is all about how successfully you can attract customer attention and how much information a customer retains in his memory about your brand. Video and pictorial content is an interesting way of grabbing customer attention.

1.4.2 DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The first dependent variable is brand awareness. Brand awareness the degree or extent to which a customer recognizes a brand. Building brand awareness is the first and most important step because purchase decisions will only take place once customer is aware that the brand exists and what it stand for. Social content as well as video/pictorial content is used by marketers to create brand awareness .

The second dependent variable is sales. The ultimate aim of all marketing efforts by a company is to generate sales. By using different platforms for marketing, a company ensures that it is reaching to a greater audience which will ultimately increase its sales.

The third dependent variable is customer loyalty. Marketers study consumer behavior so they can determine the different categories of customers that exist for their product-which customers are loyal, which customers purchase their product as a substitute, and which customers make a purchase just to try the product out. This information gives meaningful insight to the marketers as to how it can target each category of customer and how it can turn the one-time purchasers or customers who consider their product as a substitute, into loyal customers.

1.4.3 MODERATING VARIABLE

The moderating variable identified is Customer Engagement. Customer Engagement is the communication effort a company makes to keep the customers involved and in contact with the brand. Digital content marketing revolves around customer engagement as it focuses on user generated content, and customer feedback on the content companies share. Hence the independent and dependent variables are linked to one another through customer engagement.

1.5 SCOPE

The objective of this research thesis is to examine the role of digital social media marketing in helping brands to communicate and connect with the modern customers of today. The dependent variables i.e. brand awareness, sales, and customer loyalty were identified by conducting a focus group interview at ZONG office Islamabad. The impact of the two independent variables comprising social content and video/pictorial content is tested through a questionnaire, accompanied by research findings and the conclusion.

INDEPENDENT

VARIABLES

DEPENDENT

VARIABLES

SOCIAL CONTENT

BRAND AWARENESS

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

(MODERATING VARIABLE)

SALES

VIDEO AND PICTORIAL CONTENT

CUSTOMER LOYALTY
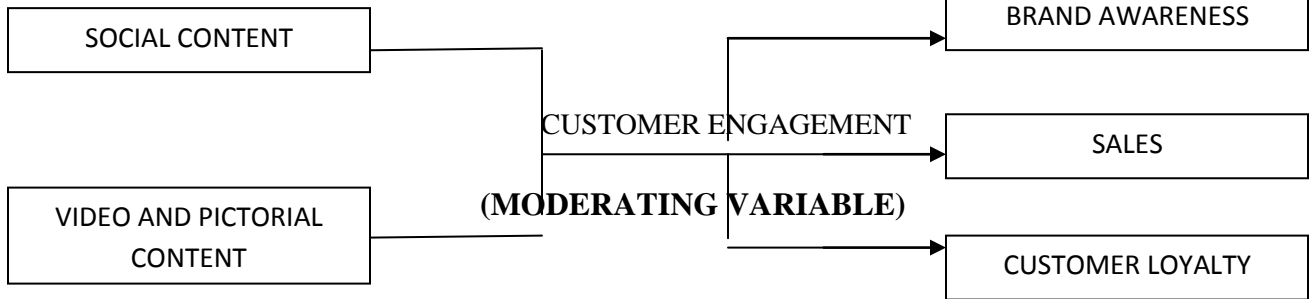
CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1CONTENT MARKETING

Content Marketing is a contemporary strategic marketing approach which aims to create valuable content to communicate with the customer . By consistently creating relevant content, it aims to enhance and/or change the behavior of customers. The customer of today is very intelligent and demands information about products and services that will help them make purchase decisions. However, he does not like selling tactics to be pushed to him all the time. Hence marketers now focus on pull strategies of marketing rather than push strategies. Customers do not want information to be thrown at them without them desiring it. They want the right to choose the information they want . So content marketing is about being ready with relevant information when the customer seeks for it himself.(Hipwell & Reeves, 2013).When a customer seeks information himself rather than being it pushed to him when he is not desiring it, he will show a greater level of interest, and will be more receptive to the information received. How well a customer responds to the content shared with him depends on the quality of the content .Good quality content can only be created when companies understand clearly the customer for whom the content is being created. Good quality content can convince customers to not only purchase the product, but also to become loyal customers and spread positive word of mouth about the brand(Seymour, 2014).

The customers today demand that content should be customized so it appears relevant to them at a personal level. A universal or standardized brand message cannot work in the world of today where customers realize that they are unique individuals(O'Reilly, 2014). They demand inclusive individuality-i.e. to be treated well as individuals and also to feel that they are a part of a larger group(Light, 2014).The digital platform can be used by marketers to fulfill this need for inclusive individuality. Not only can content be customized to give a feeling of personalization, but the customer also gets a chance to provide feedback or communicate with the company either publically or privately. He can also share his experiences with other members of the group he believes he belongs to.

Content marketing is not merely a marketing tactic, rather it is a marketing strategy. And in today's era, it is no longer an option for companies-it is something without which a company cannot exist anymore. It is all about the company acting as an advisor by communicating valuable information to the customers, rather than pushing its products to the customers as a selling tactic. However, creating and maintaining valuable content can be very challenging for companies. It is important for companies to come up with new and interesting ideas on a consistent basis otherwise the customer can become bored and might disengage himself from the brand. A good content marketing strategy focuses on entertainment and also on delivering the right information to the customers at the right time.

2.2 DIGITAL CONTENT MARKETING

The most popular way of delivering content to the customers and prospects is through the digital platform as most of the customers today are connected to the internet most of the time. With the wide use of internet on smart phones and tablets, the use of social media has also gained pace in the recent years. A survey shows that approximately 48% of users age from 18 to 34 who own a Face book account log on to their social media site the first thing in the morning. This popularity of social media creates a great potential for companies to communicate valuable content to customers on various social networks. The barriers to entry have been significantly reduced as marketing has shifted onto the digital platform. Websites, blogs, youtube, EBooks, twitter, facebook, LinkedIn-all these digital media channels have significantly reduced the cost barriers to distributing content to customers.

Content marketing is all about owning or creating the media rather than buying or renting it. This means that companies that have a website, or blog, or Youtube channel, a twitter presence or a facebook page, are indulged in content marketing in one way or the other and are acting not only as advertisers but also as publishers.
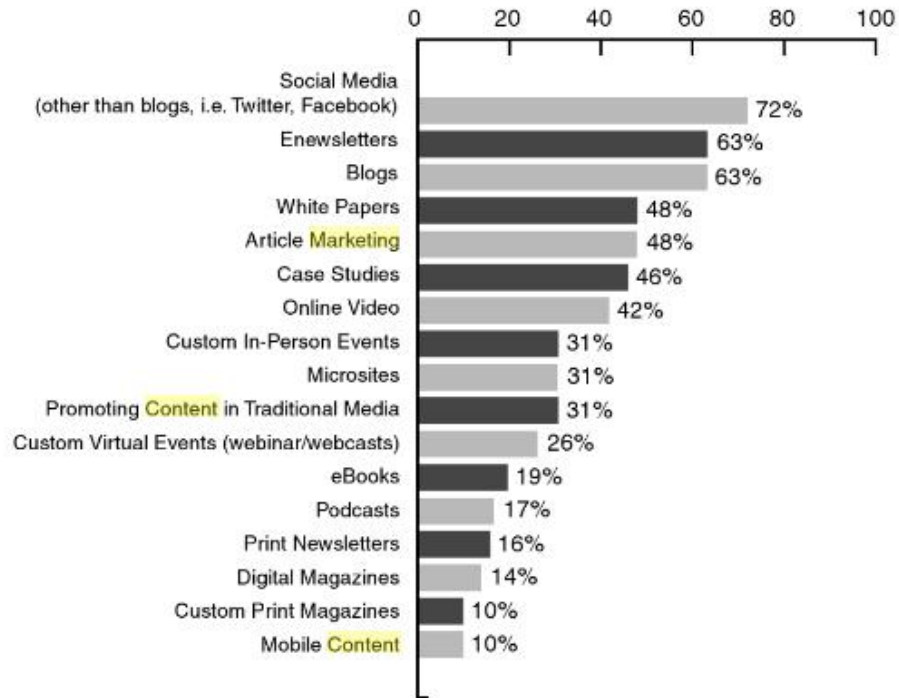
Figure 1.1 *Content Marketing Usage By Tactic.'*

As mentioned earlier, the first and most important step in creating good quality content is understanding the customer for whom the content is being created. Developing personas of distinct customer categories not only helps us understand what type of content the customer desires, but also the form of the content and where the content will appear. By dividing customers into distinct categories , we can target each category in a different way depending on a number of factors. For example, we can group people according to the kind of discussions they are involved in, on social media. Creating personas involves rigorous data mining .By looking at website analytics, it can be found from where the customers are coming from, and what keywords and phrases are used by the customers to look for your company and your competitors.

2.3 CONTENT CREATION

Content marketing is all about creating high quality content on a consistent basis while maintaining customer interest. Davis (2012, 23) suggests that content creation is all about addressing the needs and wants of the customer-what the customer desires rather than about the product or the company itself. According to Holliman & Rowley (2014), good quality content is

a combination of static content(web pages) and dynamic rich media content(videos, pictorial content, podcasts, and user-generated content).

2.4 OBJECTIVES OF CONTENT MARKETING

- To create brand awareness
- To build trust between the company and customers
- To attract leads and turn prospects into customers
- To build customer loyalty.
- To create an audience. (Ionescu, 2015).

2.5 BENEFITS OF A CONTENT MARKETING PLAN

Content marketing is all about advising the customer and helping him with appropriate information when he actually desires it. Hence it creates a strong customer relationship. Customers start trusting the company because it gives them the impression that it actually cares for them rather than being interested in merely selling its products through push strategies. As a result, the reputation of the company is also improved. Content marketing gives birth to highly aware and educated customers who serve as brand ambassadors and generate content (UGC) that promotes a positive image of the company. It also gives companies the opportunity to interact with prospects who are seeking information about products, increasing the probability of them turning into customers, provided that relevant and high quality content is delivered to them.

2.6 TYPES OF DIGITAL CONTENT

The type of content a company creates depends on the resources available at hand and also on the industry in which the company is operating. Depending upon the resources, a company can choose either multiple formats(if resources are plenty), otherwise it should focus on just few formats and try to make the most out of them. Depending on the complexity of the product, companies need to decide the format of the content to be used-in complex supply chains and products , customers might need detailed white papers, but for less complex and easy-to-use products, YouTube videos or tutorials make more sense. The different formats of content that can be used are :

Blog Post- A blog is a newsfeed section that is updated regularly, either on a standalone website or section of a website.

Videos-These can be either in the form of a tutorial or an advertisement that communicates important aspects about the product to the customers.

E-Newsletter- An E-Newsletter is received in email by those customers who subscribe for it. It is floated on a regular basis and contains important updates about the company/product.

Webinars- A webinar is an online seminar that is attended by audience through their laptops or phones.

EBooks- Electronic books that contain important information or instructions about product usage/installation etc.

White Papers- These are highly descriptive reports that explain how to solve specific problems related to a product.

Podcasts- These are audio recordings that can be downloaded through ITunes or other software and are available on a subscription basis.

2.7 SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS FOR DISTRIBUTION

Once the content format and type have been determined, next it is essential to decide what channels will be used for distribution. Which channel to use also depends on a number of factors. The most important factor is determining where the customers reside-do the customers use a particular social media channel or not. Next, it is important to determine whether the company can create content that will be relevant for the particular channel or not. The different channels that are available are :

Blog-A blog is a newsfeed that can either exist as a separate entity or as a separate section on an existing website. A blog is central to the publishing activities of a company. It is a good idea to publish all news/information on a self hosted blog and to provide teasers or headlines on social networks with links to divert traffic towards blog for details. A blog can serve as a central hub and content can be distributed on various channels.

Face book- It is the most popular social media channel with heavy customer presence. Companies can post videos/pictures on their face book page and involve customers by hosting different competitions and providing mechanism for feedback.

LinkedIn- It is a professional social media channel and hence the content that is shared here needs to be shared in a business-oriented way.

Twitter- Sharing content on twitter involves providing teasers(tweets) with links leading to details on either website or self-hosted blogs.

You Tube- Videos and tutorials regarding a company's products can be uploaded on YouTube, which can also be embedded in the company's blog and social media profiles.

SlideShare- EBooks , webinars and online presentations can all be shared or uploaded on SlideShare.
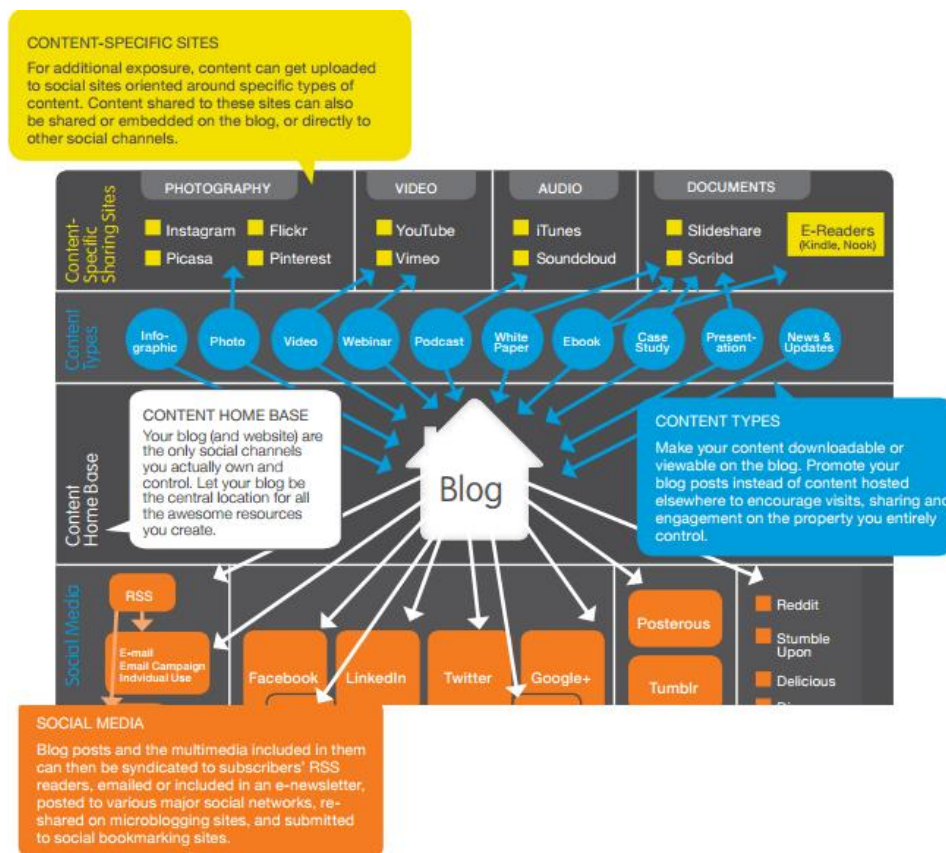
2.8 CONTENT MARKETING METRICS

Different formats and platforms can be used for the distribution of digital content. However, it is very important to measure the success of the use of each type of content and channel used. The success can be measured by taking the content lifecycle into consideration. In the beginning of the lifecycle, it is important to focus on traffic generation. After traffic generation, the focus shifts towards engagement metrics and ultimately towards conversion metrics.

The key metrics to be considered can be divided into three distinct categories-basic/consumption metrics, engagement metrics and conversion metrics.

BASIC(CONSUMPTION) METRICS

The basic or consumption metrics measure how much the content is accessed or viewed. Key consumption metrics include:

GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Users- The number of unique visitors to visit a company's website or section of website.

Page views- The total number of times a page/blog/section of the website is viewed.

Unique Page Views- The number of times a page is viewed by the same user is combined under this metric.

EMAIL

Open Rates-Giving interesting email subjects can increase the likelihood of an email being opened hence it is important to consider the subject as important content too.

Clicks- the number of clicks an email acquires is important specially when it contains links to website or blogs.

ENGAGEMENT METRICS

Engagement metrics give insight into how much interest the audience is taking in the content being shared. These metrics are important to build customer relationships and to encourage customer loyalty.

Key engagement metrics include:

GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Average Time on Page- By comparing the average time audience spends on two different content platforms or types, a company can easily determine which type is more interesting and engaging for the customer.

Pages or Sessions- The total number of links a user follows or pages he visits while on your website.

New and Revisiting visitors- the visitors who visit the website for the first time and those who return to it.

Referral Traffic- the websites that link to your website

SOCIAL MEDIA

Number of Shares-how many users re-share, repost or retweet the content the company shares

Number of Comments- how many users actually comment on the content shared.

Number of followers and their growth rate

EMAIL

Subscriber Growth- How frequently the number of subscribers to emails and newsletters is increases.

Number of unsubscribers- how many people opt to disengage or disassociate themselves from the company.

 Forward- A 'forward to friend' button can be embedded in the email which can help keep track of the number of forwards that users make.

CONVERSION METRICS

These metrics measure that how much of the audience is converted to leads and customers.

Key conversion metrics include:

LEAD GENERATION

Goals Completion- A company sets up goals in terms of newsletter signups , brochures downloads, etc and can track the completion of these goals using google analytics.

Goal Conversion Rate- This is calculated by dividing the total number of goal completion by the total number of sessions.

SALES

Transactions-The number of transactions that are made owing to the content shared on different platforms.

Time to purchase- How long it takes for a user to make a purchase after going through the content.

EMAIL

Blog and newsletter subscriptions- The number of subscriptions gives an idea of the number of leads generated.

SOCIAL

Conversion Tracking- Conversion tracking can be done on facebook and twitter by keeping track of the actions customers take after viewing a particular content.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

As previously mentioned, a research framework has been developed to determine the impact of two different digital content marketing tools on brand awareness, product sales and customer loyalty. The three set of hypothesis are as follows:

HYPOTHESIS 1:

H_0: Social Content has an impact on brand awareness

H_1: Social Content has an impact on brand sales

H_2: Social Content has an impact on customer loyalty.

HYPOTHESIS 2:

H_0: Video/Pictorial Content has an impact on brand awareness

H_1: Video/Pictorial Content has an impact on brand sales

H_2: Video/Pictorial Content has an impact on customer loyalty.

CHAPTER 3

3. METHODOLOGIES AND PROCEDURES

The objective of this research was to determine the impact of social content and video/pictorial content on brand awareness, brand sales and customer loyalty. To identify the variables that are targeted through digital content marketing, and to determine how companies use digital content marketing as a tool, a focus group interview was conducted with the E-Channel team at ZONG Headquarters Islamabad. This interview gave insight into how companies strategize to use digital content marketing and what forms of content they find most useful. On the basis of the interview results, the theoretical framework comprising of the independent, dependent and moderating variables was derived. A questionnaire was then designed to qualitatively analyze the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. 62 responses were generated and the results were analyzed based on the frequency of various responses.

3.1 LIMITATIONS

The research conducted does not take into account the demographic and psychographic profiles of the respondents. As we all know, digital platforms like social media are more popular amongst youngsters although the trend is now changing. Hence the study is based on the assumption that people having different personality profiles react similarly to different content marketing tactics.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. How often do you learn about a useful product or service while searching online for information related to a particular problem or need.

How often do you learn about a useful product or service while searching online for information related to a particular problem or need

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
Often	34	54.8	54.8	54.8
Sometimes	27	43.5	43.5	98.4
hardly ever	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

The responses clearly show that more than 50% of the respondents(54.8%) claim that they often find online information useful when considering a brand . Very few respondents claim that they hardly ever find useful information(1.7%), while none of the respondents claim to never have learnt anything useful online about the product. This shows that companies are using internet to create awareness about their products, and this medium is popularly being used by the target audience to gather information about products that interest them.

2. In which social media / social networking sites do you currently have an account?

In which social media / social networking sites do you currently have an account?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
Faceook	56	90.3	90.3	90.3
Twitter	1	1.6	1.6	91.9
Linkedin	3	4.8	4.8	96.8
Youtube	1	1.6	1.6	98.4
Other relevant networks/industry sites	1	1.6	1.6	100.0

Total	62	100.0	100.0	

90.3% of the respondents claim to have accounts on Facebook. This shows that facebook is the most popular social media platform today. Hence this creates great potential for companies to market their brands on this platform. Also, remaining respondents claim to have accounts on other sites like Twitter, LinkedIn and Youtube. Hence there is potential for these platforms to be used for digital content marketing as well.

3. How much time (in minutes) per day do you think you spend visiting social media websites?

How much time (in minutes) per day do you think you spend visiting social media websites?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
0 - 30 Minutes	9	14.5	14.8	14.8
30 - 60 Minutes	17	27.4	27.9	42.6
60 - 120 Minutes	18	29.0	29.5	72.1
more than 120 minutes	17	27.4	27.9	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

The responses clearly indicate that people are spending more and more time on social media today. 29.5% of the respondents claim to spend 60-120 minutes while 27.9% claim to spend more than 120 minutes. This further proves the fact that people take great interest in the content that is available on these social media websites, hence creating opportunities for companies to use these platforms for marketing.

4. Do you use a mobile device / smart phone to participate in social media?

Do you use a mobile device / smart phone to participate in social media?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
Yes	59	95.2	95.2	95.2

17

No	3	4.8	4.8	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

95.2% of the respondents claim that they use their smart phones to participate in social media. This indicates that they have access to social media all the time and are not dependent on the availability of laptops/desktops and internet. This further supports the fact that social media is a popular platform amongst the customers and can be exploited by companies to market their brands.

5. What type of firm/ brand related content do you find the most useful?

What type of firm/ brand related content do you find the most useful

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
Websites	16	25.8	25.8	25.8
Blogs	4	6.5	6.5	32.3
Social Medai (twitter feeds, linkedIn groups, facebook pages, etc)	33	53.2	53.2	85.5
video and images/infographics	7	11.3	11.3	96.8
others	2	3.2	3.2	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

53.2% of the respondents claimed that social content is most useful, followed by information available on websites(25.8%), followed by video and images(11.3%). This shows that these three are popular tools that customers consider referring to when finding information related to a particular brand. Hence the results support the hypothesis that social content helps to create brand awareness.

6. When researching a solution, which type of content would be the most helpful in making a purchase decision?

When researching a solution, which type of content would be the most helpful in making a purchase decision?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
High-level content that shares industry trends, insights and thought leadership.	10	16.1	16.1	16.1
Educational content that helps you understand the functions, features and benefits of the product/service	25	40.3	40.3	56.5
Promotional content that informs you of the latest products/services, offers or discounts.	16	25.8	25.8	82.3
Community-supported content that shows this company's commitment to a specific cause, topic or message.	6	9.7	9.7	91.9
Entertaining content that gives you a feel for the personality of the company.	5	8.1	8.1	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

40.3% of the respondents claim that when they want to purchase a product, they are essentially looking for educational content that will describe the features and functionality of the product . 25.8% claim that they want to know about product updates including discounts and attractive offers that might trigger purchase. Only 8.1% of the respondents claim to look for entertaining content when making a purchase decision.

7. Which of the following is most appropriately true for you?

Which of the following is most appropriately true for you

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
I usually trust what a company says about a particular topic as far as i buy regularly from that company	10	16.1	16.1	16.1
I am usually skeptical of what a company says about a particular topic even if i buy regularly from that company	9	14.5	14.5	30.6
I usually trust what a company says about a particular topic but i also confirm from other sources	43	69.4	69.4	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

69.4% of the respondents claim to trust the content available to them but also confirm from other sources. This brings the concept of User Generated Content into the analysis. The power of social media lies in customer engagement which is a moderating variable in our study. 16.1% of the respondents claim to trust the information from a brand only if they have experienced using the product and are regular buyers. This supports the hypothesis that digital content has an impact on customer loyalty.

8. Do you like to receive social media updates from brands or companies you are interested in?

Do you like to receive social media updates from brands or companies you are interested in?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
Yes	36	58.1	58.1	58.1
No	26	41.9	41.9	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

58.1% of the respondents claim that they like to get updates on brands of their interest. This again supports the hypothesis that social content has an impact on creating brand awareness. Customers like to receive information on products they like hence companies can deliver information to customers to update them regarding their products .

9. Which of the following is true once you are inspired by content shared online?

Which of the following is true once you are inspired by content shared online?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
you are more aware of what the brand stands for	30	48.4	48.4	48.4
you are inspired to make a purchase of the product	17	27.4	27.4	75.8
you are likely to engage in communication with the brand/company on social media	9	14.5	14.5	90.3
you are likely to become a loyal customer of the brand	6	9.7	9.7	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

48.4% of the respondents claim that if they are inspired by online content, it helps in them understanding the brand better. This supports our hypothesis that digital content(social content & video/pictorial content) has an impact on brand awareness. 27.4% of the respondents also claim that they will purchase the product. This supports the hypothesis that digital content(social content & video/pictorial content) has an impact on sales of a brand. However, only 9.7% of the respondents claim that it has a positive effect on their loyalty to the brand.

10. What is your expectation from a company engaged in digital content marketing?

What is your expectation from a company engaged in digital content marketing?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent

21

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
You expect some kind of new content on a frequent basis	20	32.3	32.3	32.3
You expect different and interesting content every time the company comes up with a digital marketing campaign	33	53.2	53.2	85.5
You expect the brand to connect with you emotionally on a regular basis	9	14.5	14.5	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

53.2%of the respondents claim that they expect companies to bring interesting new content on a regular basis. This supports the argument presented in the literature review that for digital content marketing to be effective, companies need to keep the level of interest high and keep updating customers with interesting innovative content.

11. What is your reaction when a company/brand wants to communicate with you through digital media?

What is your reaction when a company/brand wants to communicate with you through digital media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
You like giving feedback and expect action/response from the company in return	23	37.1	37.1	37.1
You are not interested in giving feedback since you think it is a waste of time and it will not make a difference	8	12.9	12.9	50.0
You only give feedback when you have a complain	21	33.9	33.9	83.9

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
You like to maintain communication with the company to show your loyalty and expect special treatment in return.	10	16.1	16.1	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

37.1% of the respondents claim that they like to give feedback to companies and expect the company to respond also. This shows that customer engagement is an important variable in digital content marketing. 33.9% of the respondents claim that they only give negative feedback i.e. when they have a complaint with the product or service. 16.9% of the respondents claim that they like to stay in communication with the company as it is a way of showing customer loyalty. This supports the hypothesis that social content helps to build customer loyalty through customer engagement. However there is no strong evidence of it as a small percentage of the respondents claim this result.

12. When a brand shares content in a way that u find interesting, you will...?

When a brand shares content in a way that u find interesting, you will

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Valid Percent
see the content for entertainment and forget about it	7	11.3	11.3	11.3
you will remember and recall the brand when you go to make a purchase ,however it will not influence your	18	29.0	29.0	40.3
you will be motivated to try the brand at least once	23	37.1	37.1	77.4
you will try the brand and become loyal provided that the product satisfies you	14	22.6	22.6	100.0
Total	62	100.0	100.0	

37.1% of the respondents claim that they will try the brand at least once if they find interesting content related to it. 29% of the respondents claim that it will definitely help in creating brand awareness yet it will not influence their purchase decision. 22.6% of the respondents claim that they will try the brand and will become loyal provided that the products performance is satisfactory. This shows that customer loyalty is largely dependent on product performance and digital marketing is a support function that can help retain loyal customers. Hence the hypothesis that digital content(social content & video/pictorial content) impacts customer loyalty can also be proved.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1.1 CONCLUSION

Evidence collected from focus group interview and questionnaire suggests that all the mentioned hypothesis hold true and there is a positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Companies believe that social content and video/pictorial content both are very important specially in creating brand awareness and the questionnaire results suggest the same. When we talk of digital content, we as customers look for entertainment. That is why videos are very famous tools for digital marketing e.g. use of branded entertainment. Companies believe that it is important to connect with the customers at an emotional level . However, questionnaire results suggest that entertainment content is effective mostly in creating brand awareness. When customers consider a purchase, they are essentially looking for product related information that helps them understand how the product works. Hence social content and infographics are more effective in increasing sales of a brand. Similarly customer loyalty is encouraged mostly through social content, and videos do not really have an impact on customer loyalty. Companies involve customers on their facebook pages by introducing campaigns for most loyal customers and use similiar strategies to enhance customer loyalty through customer engagement. Similialry, responding to customer complaints and ensuring that queries are closed within time also enhances customer loyalty. Hence it can be said that all the independent variables have a positive impact on the dependent variables. It can also be said that the ultimate aim of every company is to increase sales. And as mentioned in the literature review, brand awareness is the first step in the process of creating sales and increasing customer loyalty. Hence it can be suggested that brand awareness itself is also a moderating variable in the theoretical framework.

5.1.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

As the findings from the research suggest, digital content marketing is no longer an option for companies. Rather it is a must-have. Companies need to involve customers through their digital marketing strategies and come up with innovative content to engage customers. They need to understand the changing market dynamics and mould their strategy accordingly. In order to measure the impact of digital content marketing on sales, companies should launch periodic campaigns only on digital mediums, so that the contribution to sales can be easily measured. Research done by companies still suggests that TVCs are more effective tools for marketing as compared to digital tools. Companies should hence integrate their digital marketing with other means of marketing. Companies should realize the importance of having loyal customers because they can act as advocates and speak for the brand. User Generated Content is the most powerful marketing tool on the digital platform. Hence companies should make customers speak for their brand and act as referrals. Companies should also define metrics that will help them to measure the success of their digital content marketing strategies. For this purpose, strict KPIs should be set and effect of digital campaigns on sales should be measured. Customer loyalty should be enhanced by having an efficient and responsive feedback system. All these measures will help companies build upon their digital content marketing strategy as the trend is growing towards having more and more digital content, and for companies to compete in today's market and to make place for their brand in the hearts of the much intelligent and aware customer of today it is important to keep digital content updated and delivered to customer on a consistent basis while retaining customer interest.

6. APPENDIX

6.1FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Conducted at : ZONG Headquarters Islamabad

Interviewees- Sahar Kiyani (Manager E-Channel)

Sehrish (Executive E-Channel)

Qs. Which forms of online content marketing do you currently use

social content

blogging

press releases

online articles

videos

E newsletters

infographics and images

e books

mobile content

advertorials

Qs. Which three forms of online content marketing do you see the most results from

social content

blogging

press releases

online articles

videos

E newsletters

infographics and images

e books

mobile content

advertorials

Qs. What are the most difficult types of content to create(and why)

videos

webinars/online events

infographics

cases tudies

e-newsletters

photos/illustrations

news releases

Qs. which online content marketing function have you outsourced in the past twelve months

social content

blogging

press releases

online articles

videos

E newsletters

infographics and images

e books

mobile content

advertorials

Qs.What are the most effective resources for creating content

In-house content creation resources only

outsource content creation to a specialist

combination of outsourced and in house resources

Qs. Which of the following phases best describes your company's online content marketing strategy

wrote their own strategy

very high volume of generic content at low prices

customized, engaging content with responsive customer service

no response

Qs. Do you expect that your department/firm will produce more content in 2016 than 2015

Yes, the amount of content will grow

The amount of content will remain the same

No, the amount of content will decrease

Qs. DO you have plans to create new and innovative content vehicles in 2016

Yes

No

Not sure

Qs. How is your content marketing budget changing

Increasing

staying the same

decreasing

Qs. What are the primary goals of content marketing plans of your organization

customer and prospect engagement

awareness

customer loyalty

increased leads

increased revenues/sales

increased website traffic

improved search engine rankings

Qs. What are the most challenging obsatcles to content marketing success

lack of content creation resources

lack of an effective stratregy

budget constraints

inability to measure effectiveness

lack ofemployee skills

lack of varietyof content type

lack of management support

Qs. What are the most useful metrics for measuring content marketing performance(or others?)

conversion rate

quality of leads

website traffic

number of leads

sales revenue

subscriber list growth

social media sharing

search engine rankings

Qs. How successful is your organization in tracking the ROI of its content marketing program

very successful

somewhat succesful

not succesful

Qs.Can you say that your digital content markteing strategy has helped you achieve the following? If yes, in what way? Are there any metrics for measuring ?

Building brand awareness

Increasing sales

building customer loyalty

6.2 QUESTIONNAIRE

Qs1. How often do you learn about a useful product or service while searching online for information related to a particular problem or need

Often

sometimes

hardly ever

never

Qs2. In which social media / social networking sites do you currently have an account?

Facebook

 Twitter

 LinkedIn

 YouTube

 Other relevant networks/industry sites)

Qs3. How much time (in minutes) per day do you think you spend visiting social media websites?

(0-30 minutes

 30-60 minutes

 60-120 minutes

 more than 120 minutes

Qs4 .Do you use a mobile device / smart phone to participate in social media?

yes

no

Qs5. What type of firm/ brand related content do you find the most useful

website

blogs

social media(twitter feeds,linkedIn groups, facebook pages,etc)

video and images/infographics

other

Qs6. When researching a solution, which type of content would be the most helpful in making a purchase decision? Rank these five content types as 1 being the least helpful and 5 being the most helpful.

 High-level content that shares industry trends, insights and thought leadership.

Educational content that helps you understand the functions, features and benefits of the product/service

 Promotional content that informs you of the latest products/services, offers or discounts.

 Community-supported content that shows this company's commitment to a specific cause, topic or message.

 Entertaining content that gives you a feel for the personality of the company.

Qs7. which of the following is most important true for you

i usually trust what a company says about a particular topic as far as I buy regularly from that company

I'm usually skeptical of what a company says about a particular topic even if I buy regularly from that company

I usually trust what a company says about a particular topic but i also confirm from other sources

Qs8.Based on your day-to-day workload, do you HAVE time to keep up with the latest information on _____ (product/service category)?

Yes

No

Qs9. Would you prefer to have informational content delivered to you vs. you going and finding it?

 I'd like content sent to me.

 I prefer to find the information myself.

Qs10. Do you like to receive relevant emails or email newsletters from companies/brands you've purchased from or care about?

Yes

No

Qs11. Which of the following is true once you are inspired by content shared online?

you are more aware of what the brand stands for

you are inspired to make a purchase of the product

you are likely to engage in communication with the brand/company on social media

you are likely to become a loyal customer of the brand

Qs12. What is your expectation from a company engaged in digital content marketing?

You expect some kind of new content on a frequent basis

You expect different and interesting content every time the company comes up with a digital marketing campaign

You expect the brand to connect with you emotionally on a regular basis

Qs13. What is your reaction when a company/brand wants to communicate with you through digital media

You like giving feedback and expect action/response from the company in return

You are not interested in giving feedback since you think it is a waste of time and it will not make a difference

You only give feedback when you have a complain

You like to maintain communication with the company to show your loyalty and expect special treatment in return.

Qs14. When a brand shares content in a way that u find interesting, you will:

see the content for entertainment and forget about it

you will remember and recall the brand when you go to make a purchase ,however it will not influence your purchase decision.

you will be motivated to try the brand at least once

you will try the brand and become loyal provided that the product satisfies you

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