

# The Review of Content Marketing as a New Trend in Marketing Practices

Angel Wong An Kee<sup>1</sup>

Center for Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) Programs, HELP  
College of Art and Technology, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Rashad Yazdanifard

Center for Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) Programs, HELP  
College of Art and Technology, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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## Abstract

Content marketing evolves to be a powerful marketing tactic in the digital, fast moving, information driven world. It is not a new strategy but more and more enterprises begin to engage in content marketing gradually. So what are the reasons of the rise of content marketing in today's society? This paper discusses about the use of content marketing in businesses and how it brings benefits to the companies. The conclusion summarizes six strategies companies use during the implementation of content marketing in their businesses.

**Keywords:** Content marketing, implementation, benefits, information.

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## Introduction

According to Rowley (2008) content marketing can be defined as a management process where a firm identify, analyze and satisfy customer demand to gain profit with the use of digital content distributed through electronic channels. Information is integral to marketing. There is a close relationship between marketing research and consumer behavior. They collect information about customers and potential customers in order to enhance the value of the market exchange for the customers, and thereby the organization.

Customers are the starting point for marketing activities (Rahimnia & Hassanzadeh, 2013). Customers and organizations are interdependent in the market. Companies want

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author's email: [wongankee@hotmail.com](mailto:wongankee@hotmail.com)

to and have to execute marketing activities to satisfy consumer requirements. In this era of information-driven era, customers request for factual and useful information to aid them in decision making process. The art and science about content marketing is sharing valuable information with target audience. Customers today are smart and intelligent. They know they have the rights to choose what information to receive, in what kind of format that information is in and whether to believe the content (Hipwell & Reeves, 2013).

Most customers are tuned in and connected to the digital world all day because they are able to access to internet using their computers, laptops and mobile phones. Consumption of content online is becoming a common habit among online users. Based on a survey, approximately 48% of users age from 18 to 34 who own a Facebook account confessed that, logging on to their social media site is the first thing they do when they wake up. Besides, there are also audience who prefer other channels such as print media, television, radio, billboards and many more. This 24 hours audience expect to be answered and entertained 24/7. Therefore, companies are heavily engaged in presenting latest information on various marketing channels to feed the curiosity of customers. Content marketing is different from advertising; it is more to storytelling rather than bravado. In another word, a firm advertises if it wants to tell the world that it is a rock star, but if it wants to show and prove why it is one, have great contents (Solomon, 2013). Following are the ways content marketing can be implemented to achieve effective marketing strategy.

### **Localization**

Most multinational companies (MNCs) involve in content marketing and they focus on adapting their message to target the right audience when doing business globally (Content Marketing World looks at the significance of linguistics in brand strategy, 2014). It is important for marketers to alter the contents to a way that they are culturally relevant and at the same time ensuring contents to be appropriate and accurate to maintain a consistent brand image. There are three main components in managing global content, which are people, company processes and system. All branches in different countries have to make all three to work together in order to create a clear and uncluttered brand image in each foreign office.

Localization always helps MNCs to survive and turn fruitful in countries other than home country. This is due to the difference in cultures, customers' values and views. Therefore it is almost impossible to use same standards and strategies in different countries. Pierce states that having standards that people do not agree is a much bigger problem than not having enough standards (Content Marketing World looks at the significance of linguistics in brand strategy, 2014). Localization and translation makes content effective for respective market and culture. The importance of having localized content is to make certain that message is in the language and form that local customers can understand (Kutlu, 2008).

Beninato says brands cannot assume that "this is us in the United States" and bring the same idea to another country (Content Marketing World looks at the significance of linguistics in brand strategy, 2014). The brands that have this thought are bound to fail

because they only focus on what they are and what they can do instead of making effort to find out what customers want. Customers are catered to options and choices in this competitive market. Firms must make sure that the content works the way they want when consumers choose them. Apart from getting the right words, right placement and right timing must also exist, within a culture.

### **Personalization**

There are a growing number of customers who expect to have personalized customer experiences that reflects personal needs, attitudes and situations (Light, 2014). Customers want to be treated well as individuals and want to feel they belong to a group. This is called a need for “inclusive individuality”. They look for the feelings of independent and interdependent at the same time. They want to feel respected as individuals and they want to possess this feeling with a group of people. They do not wish to feel like they are the odd ones in the community. With the help of digital technology, content marketers have the ability to fulfill their needs for “inclusive individuality”. Marketers are capable of creating personalized contents that are relevant to each and every consumer. On the other hand, consumers enjoy the privilege to individualize their experience and then share it with the communities they belong to regardless of geographical locations because people all around the world are connected on the internet.

The changing consumer behavior stimulates content marketers to come up with modern marketing strategies to cater to the needs of both individuality and inclusiveness. Marketers carry out content marketing online to better personalize contents for consumers. Customers visit social media sites constantly to obtain valuable, relevant and up-to-date contents such as articles, videos, blog posts and more. They simultaneously seek for quality and personalized experience during the viewing of content on the internet (Seymour, 2014). They are given the options to respond to these contents individually and privately, and share them to other members with common interest. Digital allows marketers to create rich, attractive contents. Therefore, consumers’ heavy engagement in internet is beneficial for organizations. It is easier to influence perception and behavior of an engaged audience compared to those who do not pay attention to the content. As the market evolves, a standardized, inflexible brand message can no longer affect customers because customers realize they are unique individuals with distinct demands. Personalized message makes a firm to stand out from numerous competitors in the market since the content is relevant to the audience (O'Reilly, 2014).

Global brands used to implement standardized content to promote brands. However as time passes, consumers enter the age of inclusive individuality. This causes marketers to work past the challenges of the global, regional, personalized marketing. A personalized message helps firms to reach quality target audience. A good example of multinational company that successfully deliver personalized message to consumers is Coca Cola. Coke Zero organized an event on social media sites which called “my favorite dance moves” that fits inclusive individuality (Hussain, 2013). When customers sense familiarity, they rely on the brands. When customers feel respected as individuals, they become loyal to the brands. Consumers will form deeper relationships with a brand if they receive personalized, relevant and valuable information. Loyal customers who are passionate

about a brand are more likely to spread positive word of mouth. Marketers will then maintain customer base and attract new customers.

## **Emotions**

One of the success indicators of content marketing is for the content marketing message to go viral. An article or video posted by a company is considered as successful if the number of clicks and shares are high. It is discovered that two factors determined the success of an article (Wylie, 2014). First of all, it is about how positive the message is. Positive message has a higher possibility to go viral compared to the negative one. The second key to an effective content marketing is how much emotion the message incites. There is a higher chance that customers will act upon the content when the emotion is more extreme. For example, people are more likely to share articles that anger them rather than those that make them feel disappointed or sad.

Honey Made, a graham cracker brand films series of documentaries titled “This is Wholemeal”. It shows audience the stories on the lives of three different families and how they cope with their situations (Adams, 2014). The video feature a military family, a single dad, and a same-sex couple with two children. It is not a usual advertisement where these families revolve around the products of the company. Honey Made graham crackers only appear a few times in the documentaries. The plot emphasizes on these families, their hardships, and as the story progresses, it implies what makes their family life wholesome. This campaign stands out from others because it is captivating, touching and genuine. The story reminds people of their own families and inspires them to fill their life with more love every day. It is proved that people will share or forward articles to their friends when they can relate to the message (Botha & Reyneke, 2013).

## **Diversification of Approach**

In order to overcome the issue of content marketing overwhelm, marketers may try to use a diversified regimen (Harad, 2013). It can be tiring for content marketers to continuously come up with creative ideas and inspiring phrases to catch consumers’ attention. Sometimes marketers might be running out of ideas or customers are bored of the same voice. If the same marketer constantly posts up similar style of information format, customers may get uninterested and eventually disengage themselves from the brand. There are a lot of substitutes in the market, in addition customers like attractive brands and fresh contents. Firms are recommended to mix up their routine with the following tactics.

Hiring a journalist with great talent helps marketing department to create effective content and offer new ideas from another perspective (Scott, 2007). Content marketers can provide the main topic ideas and allow the journalist to write publicity material freely. A good journalist can create interesting stories about the firm and deliver those contents in a refreshing way to customers. Another alternative is to hire an editor. Marketers will provide their writing and let the editor extracting content from facts. A video editor can help to spice up the content by turning a PowerPoint presentation into a compelling video clip.

Next, partner up is also a good method to make contents more entertaining. For example, interview people of interest to company's target audience in video. Creating visuals to support contents improves conversion rates and increase the effectiveness of content (Handley, 2014). Besides that, inviting guests to provide content for newsletter, webinars, or blog can increase consumers' anticipation. Also, marketers should identify a strategic partner with whom they can team up for educational seminars and other training opportunities.

Lastly, voice is a fun element which can be included during delivering message to audience. Some marketers perform better when they are explaining concepts or sharing opinions in conversation. There are three ways to do so. First, marketers record and transcribe the file. Second, podcast is a good way for marketers to share great content and thoughts (Marzec, 2015). Third, hold a teleseminar or webinar and record it. Links are to be sent through email to audience. Marketers need to take note of an important point which is distributing the links to the right audience because wrong target audience might view it as irrelevant content and get irritated (Morgen, 2015)

### **Co-creation and Trust**

Co-creation emerges when online users seek for opportunity to participate in generating information towards organizations for consumer insights (Tunby Gulbrandsen & Just, 2011). The modern idea of co-creation derives from three areas (Ind, Iglesias & Schultz, 2013). First and foremost, since 1990s, people are able to connect to others all around the world with technological advancement and emergence of digital communication. Digital technology enables online users with similar interest to build their own communities globally and exchange ideas on goods and services. Second area is that firms encourage customers to participate in business operation because they want to have better understandings towards customers and create a sense of belongingness in them. Some companies have taken this opportunity to get customers participate and turn them into partners and co-developers. A research suggests that having customers to contribute information to organizations facilitates content exploration (Goldenberg, Oestreicher-Singer & Reichman, 2012). Co-creation brings several benefits to organizations that apply this idea to their business. Apart from adding values to new products, it enhances the capacity for consumer insights, develops good relationships with consumers and minimizes risk.

Third, the increasing emphasis within marketing thinking on the exchange of intangibles has changed the focus from the act of purchase to usage (Ind, Iglesias & Schultz, 2013). This concept unites marketers and consumers, meaning that organizations can reach out to consumers and consumers can take part in the brand operations. Firms cannot survive with traditional way of selling and marketing their products these days. Collaboration and co-creation is the new logic of brand and branding because it builds trust in consumers and retain customers (Merz, He and Vargo, 2009). Customers tend to have more trust in companies that listen to their needs and ideas. The general idea of co-creation is to help organizations to create customer experience and improve connection with stakeholders. Besides that, social media and brand communities act as a platform for organizations to view customer conversations and analyze them. This process where consumers voice out their opinions and firms interpret their views demonstrates the

cooperation between marketers and consumers in developing ideas and innovations. Companies implement this strategy to involve outsiders to contribute their skills in ideas developing. Co-creation causes business operation to be more exciting because customers get to make partial decision. Furthermore, user-generated content has a positive impact on brand equity (Christodoulides, Jevons & Bonhomme, 2012).

Fuller suggests that consumers' personality can affect their motivation in taking part in information sharing and this may cause different expectations towards co-creation (2011). Motivation can be categorized into two types which are intrinsic and extrinsic. According to Cherry, some people seem to be more attracted to external rewards such as money, fame and praises whereas some engage in behaviors arises from within their inner self that is driven by internal rewards. Based on Fuller's research, customers who are intrinsically interested usually possess highest level of motivation. Moreover, these consumers are relatively more creative and knowledgeable and enjoy the satisfaction brought by co-creation compared to other personality types. They are the ones who would actively take part in co-creation because they want others to recognize their expertise.

### **Ethical and honesty**

Sometimes the paid and owned media are not enough to attract customers, and audiences may be unresponsive to a hard sell (Syzdek, 2014). Push marketing irritates customers because it forces them to receive information. On the other hand, they favor pull marketing for instance content marketing. Marketers create attractive and creative contents and publish them on various platforms while customers have the freedom to choose to search and read. McCambley says brand sponsors must provide full disclosure even though he believes that good native advertising is indistinguishable from editorial. "If your content is good, own it," he quotes. He also mentions that labeling only comes into question when the content isn't good. Content marketer should never trick people to get their attention.

If morals and ethics are at the heart of a marketer, then disclosure and transparency are the veins and arteries that drive a business success (Syzdek, 2014). Media outlets must make sure that brand partners and audience are fully aware of the policies on sponsored content. Public relations professionals are responsible to ensure full disclosure. Based on Public Relations Society of America's Board of Ethics, public relations professionals may offer financial support to media partners via sponsored content advertising while protecting and enhancing the credibility of a news outlet. Marketers should make disclosures clear and visible to customers throughout the advertisement. Sponsorship must be as transparent as possible so that no misunderstandings or problems arise. Market products and services by telling lies, giving false statistics and covering the truth no longer works in today's society ("Honesty", 2008). Ultimately, marketers should be relevant, authoritative and authentic.

While competing with multiple destinations and outlets for attention, we are also seeing the rise of the social artist (Gagliano, 2014). Social artists are people who use creative skills to work with people or organizations in their community to affect change. Marketers should embrace them instead of competing with these outlets. Furthermore, organizations should avoid leading the reader or journalist to think that they are marketing

to them. Instead let locals and brand enthusiasts tell your story for you. Not only is that a more efficient way to produce content, but it also brings independent voices to the mix while building trust and transparency with potential travelers. Honesty is the best policy. Customers put their trust in honest and ethical companies rather than those that overpromise.

## Discussion

Content marketing is also known as story marketing (Sullivan, 2013). It is all about informing and persuading audience with solid content to raise awareness or change their perception about a brand. Better content can motivate customers to buy goods or services, transform them into loyal customers and even have them to spread the message to others. Content marketing also acts as a tactic to build and sustain relationships via publishing valuable contents to target audience. It enhances the purchasing process by adding values to customers (Odden, 2013). Content marketing transforms marketers to publishers as the current trend of marketing practice evolves. Although it is not easy for marketing experts to drastically change their way of marketing products, the number of larger brands that execute this transition is increasing gradually (Pulizzi, 2012). For instance, estimation of over 60% of Kelly Service's marketing budget is spent on content creation and distribution activities. Kelly Service is a global recruitment firm founded in America (Kelly Services, 2015).

There are more and more companies realize the importance of content marketing. Google introduces a research project, Zero Moment of Truth in 2011 (Lecinski, 2014). It investigates the way customers search for information, how information influence consumer behavior and what decisions they made about brands. It discovers that consumers search through double the amount of content online that resulting in purchasing decision compared to previous year. From 2010 to 2011, the number of contents viewed by average consumers goes up from five pieces to ten pieces. In the trend of content marketing, organizations must ensure they have effective content marketing practices or else they will be eliminated by consumers. Besides, user-generated content encourage users to engage in crowdsourcing, contribute ideas to brands and provides useful information to other users (Neiburger, 2010). Consumers refer to online products reviews during buying process because they believe in what other existing consumers think of the brands. Thus marketers begin to learn how online reviews are generated. Many brands make an effort in stimulating more users to interact with each other and subscribe to one another for the purpose of collecting more reviews to the website (Goes, Mingfeng & Ching-man Au, 2014). Another advantage of content marketing strategy is giving companies an opportunity to position their products. Positioning is based on firm's reputation in the market and its quality of goods and services. Marketers create and publish effective content which can help them to reinforce company's positioning. Who would have ever guessed that the future of marketing is, in fact, not marketing at all, but publishing (Gagnon, 2014). Customers will not be satisfied with exaggeration or marketing gimmicks. Appropriate, valuable and rich content is needed to trigger purchasing behavior and influence buying habits.

## Conclusion

Brands will now accomplish their marketing goals, not mainly through interruptive media, but by creating and distributing the most valuable information on the planet for that particular niche. Content marketing has been introduced long time ago, however not many organizations engage in it back then. Nevertheless, it is becoming the new trend in marketing world lately due to the shift in consumer behaviors and technological aspects. Customers realize the power of knowledge and information can lead to better purchasing decisions. Thus they start to demand for more information. Moreover, they are getting smarter and smarter so marketers have no choice but to produce accurate and great contents because manipulation of information does not work in this digital age.

A few features need to be taken into consideration to achieve effective content marketing. The significance of localization in message raises the success rate of reaching target audience. Using one single message globally is risky due to the cultural differences and customers' expectation varies. Next, it is better to have contents personalized because consumers demand for individualistic. They wish to feel special and respected as individuals. Customers are more likely to form deeper relationships with a brand when the message is personalized and contains strong emotions. On the other hand, it is best if contents are prepared in diversified routines: hire out, partner up and use voice. Different ways of conveying message can gain the interest of audience. Cooperation between marketers and customers in generating information makes the contents fun and trustworthy. Consumers believe that user-generated contents are far more trustable because they are not paid to spread positive word of mouth about certain brands. Lastly, it is crucial for firms to be ethical and honest with public. Public hates to be deceived and manipulated. Hence, content marketers must make sure that the contents are real and transparent to build trust and maintain customer loyalty. Marketing trend is evolving in a way that publishing is replacing marketing.

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