

## **THE NEW PHENOMENON OF THE MARKETING WORLD IN THE DIGITAL ERA: CONTENT MARKETING**

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### **Abstract**

*With the use of internet-based technologies, a new era has started in the marketing that always keeps itself up to date and sometimes determines up to date. Marketing activities have been involved in transformation process with digital marketing applications. As a result of digital marketing, content has become one of the most important elements. Content marketing has provided important information to companies and consumers about frequent and qualified conversations' performed how, when, where and by who. In the past, companies preferred to talk with their consumers when they have something which appropriates to share or in other words when they have news worth to share. However, as a result of the changing business and market conditions and socializing consumers, companies have had to be creating conversation/chat platforms with the consumers. Content marketing is one of the key strategies that can respond to this transformation. Therefore, content is a phenomenon that needs to be considered and improved as an important marketing tool. The aim of this conceptual study is examined the concept of content marketing in the context of content generated by the companies rather than by the consumers. For that purpose, this study contains the concept of content and content marketing, the organization of content marketing, content planning, content marketing effectiveness, content marketing costs and so on.*

*Keywords: Content Marketing, Organization of Content Marketing, Web-based Technologies and Marketing, Content Marketing Planning, Content Marketing Effectiveness*

## INTRODUCTION

It has started a new era with the use of internet-based technology in the marketing which always follows the up to date and sometimes determines the up to date. Marketing activities have involved in a process of transformation and change with the help of digital marketing applications. However, this mentioned process have not occurred suddenly; it has been a gradual, cumulative and progressive process. For instance, through Usenet which is considered a first web-based technology tool, the nature and the extent of communication carried out with consumers has changed considerably. This communication continued with blogs and then the various type of social media tools such as; MySpace, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (Blackshaw, 2011: 109). It has become more important not only for business which they want to share something with consumers about their products and services but also for the customers' products and services, as well as the other interested parties. According to the Social Media Industrial Report (2012), 86% of marketers believed that social media tools are important components of their marketing initiatives (Ashley and Tuten, 2015:15).

New media allows to consumers to be both user and the publisher (user/consumer-generated content). Moreover, consumer-generated content was used TIME's cover in 2006. Person of the Year has been determined as "you". "You" means that everybody who contributed to the consumer-generated content in the various social tools (YouTube, Twitter, Wikipedia, etc.) (Grossman, 2008). Therefore, content marketing can also provide some additional benefits to consumers to see products, services, brands, and businesses may create what kind of social interactions.

Social content sharing has become a part of modern life with the existence of web-based technologies. More and more organizations and individuals are providing content. According to AOL and Nielson, there are 27 million pieces of content shared daily (Pophol, 2016: 16). Indeed, 59% of people stated that they often share online content with other people. People are sharing to newspaper news to their friends, sending YouTube videos to their relatives and sharing their ideas with neighbors about a new restaurant and its services. So, such social sharing have a significant effect on consumers and brands. Products, services, and organizations are made visible by social media, as they are rated, tagged, commented upon, blogged, poked, tweeted and even friended (Hardey, 2011:13). Methods of interpersonal communication and their impacts on decision-making process have revealed in previous studies. And also, it has been stated that word of mouth has a significant impact on product adaptation and sales in the recent research (Berger and Milkman, 2012: 192).

In this study, contents generated by businesses will be examined rather than contents generated by consumers. Besides, consumer-generated contents will be stated as one of the major factors that affect the transformation of communication.

## **THE CONCEPT OF CONTENT AND CONTENT MARKETING**

Digital content has been conceptualized as objects that are bit-based distributed through electronic channels (Kanttila, 2004: 46; Rowley, 2008:517). The content marketing concept is conceptualized as, "a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience with the objective of driving profitable customer action." by Content Marketing Institute (Abel, 2012: 11). According to another definition, content marketing is a blanket term that describes the process of creating and sharing relevant brand information in hopes of engaging current consumers and attracting new ones (Cramer, 2012). In that case, content marketing is a type of communication art, and it has not direct selling purpose (Abel, 2012: 11). Content marketing is a powerful approach that provides a meaningful way to the companies by sharing insightful information that consumers seek. By this perspective, we can say that it is about helping to the consumers by providing useful and valuable information in time through the websites, blogs and social media channels (Gattis, 2014: 52).

Content is a broad concept as referred everything that created and loaded in the web. This concept contains words, visuals, tools and everything else. From this perspective, homepage, the page of about us, the page of frequently asked questions, the page of product information, everything else –like videos, blogs, images, webinars, e-books, podcasts, etc.- can be referred as a content. Besides, all of the shared content except company's official website - Facebook profile, Twitter or LinkedIn- is also a type of content (Handlay and Chapman, 2012: 35).

Content marketing defining is an important issue, because it sometimes regarded as a type of advertising. In fact, content marketing differs from advertising regarding its extent and nature. Clarifying of some factors is essential to make this distinction properly. These factors are content resides (owned or earned media) and content strategy (pull or push strategy). Then, it is possible to say; content marketing relies on pull strategy on the owned media (Miller and Washington, 2013: 486).

Although content marketing may seem like an extension of e-marketing at first glance, it is not an idea that contained activities conducted only through e-channels. E-marketing is considered as a branch of marketing communication. Besides, it has been perceived as a

complement of public relations, advertising, and sponsorships. But, content marketing can be evaluated an approach in the context of service marketing also (Rowley, 2008:522).

It is also important to determine differences between content marketing and traditional methods. It is possible to build a relationship with traditional network methods, but this process will be longer than content marketing process, so content marketing has provided advantages about timing (Frederiksen, 2012: 5). It offers to reach related and timely information (Forsyth, 2004: 228-231). Thereby, it is possible to say that traditional marketing is about selling but content marketing is about helping in time to customers (Gattis, 2014: 52).

Content marketing is widely used and is expanding its scope. Some factors such as the elimination of technological barriers, the presence of skilled staff capable of managing their content marketing practices, adoption of highly by customer-generated content, the rising value of social media and effectiveness of search engines (Google, etc.) are important developments that cause to increase content marketing practices. (Pulizzi, 2012: 20). Also, changes in marketing notion and changes in customer behavior and expectations increase the importance of content marketing (Handley and Chapman, 2012:33-35).

### **Organization of Content Marketing**

In general, the organization of the content marketing consists of editors, listeners, and contributors from inside and outside of the organization. Contributors who help to discover the content in the organizations are such as senior executives, experienced managers in the company, technical and product development staff, etc. (Gagnon, 2014:69). Rowley (2008: 525) has also classified stakeholders as a contributor who involved in the process. These are:

- creative stakeholders (such as authors, artists, composers, programmers and designers),
- legal/legislative/governance stakeholders (such as IP lawmakers, governments, standards organizations, and lobby groups),
- commercial stakeholders (such as publishers, distributors, broadcasters, film companies, and music companies),
- technology stakeholders (such as IT companies, DRM vendors, software/hardware vendors, and device makers),
- Consumer/ end-user stakeholders (consumers of music, film, literature, and software).

### **Content Marketing Planning**

Developing a content-based marketing program is more than offering a free white paper call-to-action (Gagnon, 2014:68). Content marketing is related to how, and what kind of contents (blog

posts, podcasts, video, interview, etc.) produced in the organization (Elaqua and Kapost, 2012) Content plan aims to generate useful content with the best appropriate costs. Hence, the content plan is related to not only what will publish, but also related to how and where it will publish. According to Focus Research, businesses are used various and mixed contents from blog posts to webinars depending on the sector that they are in (Hadley, 2012:52). For instance, frequently asked questions pages that were created through the website, are considered a life saver. (Handley, 2012:53). Because of those mentioned various and mixed contents, road maps that can be applied in content marketing strategies are crucial. Frederiksen (2012: 6) stated that a successful content marketing strategy in the web, it should include as follows;

- free content that focuses on the client's interests, not the firm's story,
- a regularly updated blog,
- search engine optimized (SEO) terms that improve the site's chance of being included in search results,
- a resource center made up of higher-value content that users receive in exchange for contact information,
- calls to action that encourage visitors to exchange their email address for valuable content,
- easy-to-use forms that allow users to provide information without frustration.

It should be clarified that content marketing is practiced by all corporations any type and any size, not only by large sized companies. That means the strategy of content marketing can be adapted to each company according to what their organization needs. For that purpose, some issues such as objectives of content marketing, analysis of the target, type of used content marketing, promotion channels, content marketing timetable, as well as measuring the impact of marketing content need to clarify (Patruti Baltes, 2015: 114).

Besides, a good content strategy should start with a "why" question. In other words, it should find answers to some questions and form the contents according to these replies (Handley and Chapman, 2012: 53). Besides, it should be noted that people are looking for entertainment in social media, so they don't want to read technical content. They prefer to reach the main message rather than details. For that reason, the title of the post is crucial. Also, another important issue is, contents should contain visual as photographs and videos. For instance, Technorati that is an important content publisher in the blogosphere does not accept documents without photographs. In fact, contents that contain more photographs and videos are grabbing more attention and having more comments and likes (Newman, 2012:5).

Lastly, content marketing practitioners should take into account some steps such as identifying information pain points, having an effectively developed brand story, selecting correct distribution channels, having brand journalists and storytellers, regarding customers as part of the content marketing team and targeting growing groups etc. (Kho, 2010:30-34).

### **Content Marketing Effectiveness**

According to Burson-Marsteller's report (2010) titled "Global Social Media Check-Up" found that 79% of Fortune 100 companies were using at least one of four platforms-Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, or corporate blogs to engage directly with customers (Kho, 2010:31). Also, Pinterest, LinkedIn, StumbleUpon, Google+ and Instagram are growing up social media tools. They are getting popular day by day. For instance, Instagram is a social platform which has over 400 million (updated number in 2016) users. Also, 42% of Top 100 brands are using this platform (Newman, 2012:5). Thus, measuring the effectiveness of those channels are so crucial.

Measuring content marketing effectiveness is quite easy. Because online social channels can be monitored, measured and compared with the others. Many of social channels provide convenience about tracing the indicators as subscribers, links, comments, number of views, likes, downloads, scores and the most (Handley and Chapman, 2012:62). Besides, some key search engines such as Google AdWords, Wordtracker, and Keyword Discovery are vital channels to keep tracking what is going on digital media about your organization. With the help of those, consumption metrics (Google Analytics, Traffic, Open Rates), sharing metrics (retweets, forwards, likes), leads metrics (generated) and sales metrics (Deals) (Patritui Baltes, 2015: 115) might be measured.

Businesses are aimed at customer retention, educate to customers, improve the reliability and expertise in the sector, tell stories, word of mouth through social networks and stimulate impulsive buying behaviors through content marketing activities (Handley and Chapman, 2012:38). It was asked to companies in a survey (2012) conducting by Custom Content Council "what is the primary reason for using content marketing". Responses were as follows; educate to customers (49%), customer retention (26%), brand loyalty (14%), upsell customers (5%), respectively. Besides, State of Content Marketing 2012 survey by Outbrain, "which is the most effective types of content" was asked to the marketers. Responses were as follows, email newsletters (50%), social posts and updates (46%), blog posts (36%), videos (31%), news/feature articles on own site (29%), press releases/PR articles (27%), white papers (15%), webinars/webcasts/podcasts (13%), infographics (12%), print magazines (10%), mobile apps (6%) e-books (4%), respectively (Miller and Washington, 2013 : 487).

## Content Marketing Costs

According to 12th Industry Characteristics Study published by Custom Content Council, North American Companies are spending 40.2 billion dollars to content marketing activities, 23.6 billion dollars belong to traditional media, 11.4 billion dollars belong to digital media and 5.2 billion dollars belong to videos and others, respectively. Also according to Content Marketing Management Institute and MarketingProfs, an average company is reserving 25% of its total marketing budget to create content and spread it. Besides, State of Content Marketing (2012) research by Quitbrain, social media has come into prominence as a most popular channel. It is stated that 98% of respondents make use of social media. (Miller and Washington, 2013: 486-487).

Within this context, it is possible to reduce cost and even make a profit with the help of content marketing. Because content marketing has a lot of cost advantages as re-use of content that produced, timing advantages and reduces costs storage and transportation (Forsyth, 2004: 231). On the other hand, although it has lots of advantages about costs, it is possible to experience some of the difficulties such as finding a budget especially and having a content marketing vision. According to the research was conducted by MarketingProfs and Content Marketing Institute, the biggest challenges faced in content marketing programmes are producing the kind of content that engages prospects/customers (41%), producing enough content (20%), creating a budget to produce content (18%), lack of buy-in/vision from higher-ups inside your company (12%), producing a variety of content (7%), creating a budget to license content (1%) (Pulizzi ve Handley2012:13).

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Content marketing will be a new phenomenon in the marketing when considered its purpose, scope and methods and tools used in. This idea will lead profound change in the marketing. By assuming that marketing aims to create value, there is no challenge except for organizations and leaders who will form, improve and offer contents that will serve to this purpose. With the dynamic and creative identity, marketing will be a leader of new communication types. But, there will be roles and expectations that will fall on to all stakeholders in this process.

This paper have organized as a conceptual work but for the future research, it would be beneficial to see empirical research on the issue. For that purpose, future research by using qualitative and quantitative methods together would gave more insights to the all parties concerned.

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