Analysis of content marketing, its distribution, goals and metrics in the selected field

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Abstract: Content marketing is a contemporary marketing paradigm with many long term benefits such as building brand loyalty by engaging with the target audience with valuable content without employing promotional techniques. However, more clarity is needed about the role of content marketing in social media content communities, especially because content marketing is often confused with social media marketing. This paper focuses on the marketers operating in the technological sector and their subjective perceptions of the effectiveness of content marketing in their organisations. presents the findings from the group of 300 respondents who indicated they worked for technology organizations that primarily sell products/services. It covers three main areas, namely distribution, goals and metrics all in relation to content marketing.

Key words: content, marketing, distribution, goals, metrics

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Introduction

Brands have a growing interest in social media–based brand communities to cultivate relationships with consumers through community building activities. Brand researchers concur that community building in social media leads to more brand loyalty and trust, although there are still different perspectives on how to achieve it. Consequently, there are ample studies on diverse brand community topics through lenses such as virtual brand communities, social media marketing and consumers' reasons for joining brand communities in social media. (Potgieter, Naidoo 2017; Rosenthal, Brito 2017) Fewer studies focus on social media content communities whose main purpose is to share content in various formats among users (Kaplan, Haenlein 2010). Recently, social media content communities have become more prominent because of brands that use content marketing as a branding technique. Content marketing is a contemporary marketing paradigm with many long term benefits such as building brand loyalty by engaging with the target audience with valuable content without employing promotional techniques . However, more clarity is needed about the role of content marketing in social media content communities, especially because content marketing is often confused with social media marketing . Although social media marketing is widely adopted on social media platforms, it is more promotional and interfering than content marketing. While there are similarities between content and social media marketing, they have different processes, focal points and goals. Weinberg (2009) defines social media marketing as the process that empowers individuals to promote their websites, products, or services through online social channels and tap into a much larger community that may not have been available via traditional channels.

1. Theoretical background

The term 'content marketing' coined by Pulizzi (2010) from the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), is not new but it is still evolving. Defining content marketing has been challenging as its meaning changes depending on the context. Marketers are increasingly adopting content marketing to replace interruptive advertising and to attract more attention to the brand . Content marketing is ideal as it uses unobtrusive pulling and not pushing techniques to attract consumers to brand content (Liu, Huang 2015). It furthermore implements theories of marketing communications, integrated marketing communication and relationship marketing. However, unlike promoting products or services, content marketing is a branding method that creates and distributes relevant and valuable brand content to entice and involve the target audience. Practitioners create and share brand stories online to make the target audience more familiar with the brand . Content marketing is often seen as resembling publishing, native advertising, inbound marketing and storytelling (Du Plessis 2015) Numerous definitions of content marketing abound but thus far the CMI's definition of content marketing is still very popular which defines it as:the marketing and business process for 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. More recent studies about content marketing have approached it, among others, from angles such as business-to-business strategy, brand engagement (Vivero 2016), company branding , its fundamentals, practical performance , online marketing strategy, as a new trend in marketing practice customer satisfaction, optimisation, digital channels, opportunities and challenges and search advertisement effectiveness (Pazeraite, Repoviene 2016). Although these studies consider social media as a tool that supplements a content marketing strategy, to the researcher's knowledge no study has specifically looked at content marketing's role in social media content communities to engage with the target audience in a more natural manner. Because content marketing follows and practices a 'consumer-centred philosophy´, social media content communities allow for conversations around content, which a brand could use to resolve concerns, while the community members could also assist each other through user-generated content. In addition, more storytelling opportunities could connect consumers with the brand on a deeper emotional level. In this regard, Du Plessis (2015) argues that content marketing mirrors the natural occurrence and unobtrusiveness of content in private online media spaces while natural messages also add more warmth and a familiar brand voice in social media.However, the evolvement of social media also gave rise to social media content communities where users consume, generate and share multimedia content on blogs, social bookmarking sites, and photo and video sharing communities because of a need for interest-driven participation. Some of the most popular content communities are currently focused on videos (YouTube), photos (Instagram and Flickr), bookmarking (del.icio.us), presentations (Slideshare) and audio (postcasts) (audio) (Content communities n.d.). Various community-driven question-and-answer portals, such as Quora and Yahoo Answers, also provide an alternative to finding answers without search engine searches but are not the focus of the study.

Research by Chi (2011) indicates that users are more accepting of conversations in social media communities than advertising, as they are less intrusive. Social media has thus changed communities in that they are no longer only collected around a brand but also around social content interactions among the community members. Brands need to sustain these conversations with relevant and compelling content as part of a content strategy without interrupting the conversations. To engage consumers in a social media content community the content strategy should focus on identifying the type of content that would be interesting and relevant by understanding the target audience . Consumers view brand content in their newsfeeds and choose to like, share or comment on them, which is a form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Research indicates that users engage most with brand posts that are consistent, interactive and vivid. Engagement is a multi-dimensional concept, and various perspectives about what it entails are evident across different academic disciplines. (Tafesse 2015)

2. Methodology and results

Paper focuses on the marketers operating in technological sector and theri subjective perceptions of effectivness of content marketing in their organisations. It uses a methodology of Infegy. We have selected the most relevant parts, which are presented below and offerd a discussion regarding this context. This survey was mailed electronically to a sample of marketers using lists from Content Marketing Institute, MarketingProfs, The Association for Data-driven Marketing & Advertising (ADMA), and WTWH Media. A total of 2,562 recipients from around the globe—representing a full range of industries, functional areas, and company sizes—completed the survey during July and August 2016. This paper presents the findings from the group of 300 respondents who indicated they worked for technology organizations that primarily sell products/services to businesses (B2B) [92%] or to both businesses and consumers (B2B+B2C) [8%]. When asking about the marketing tools used by organization, Fewer than 50% of technology marketers said they use the following tools: Measurement KPIs/Dashboard (49%), Social Media Guidelines (44%), Media Plan/Paid Advertising Calendar (35%), Content Collaboration/Workflow Software (19%), Editorial Mission Statement (15%), Digital Asset Management (DAM) System/File Storage (14%), Content Distribution Software (10%), Content Planning/Creation Software (9%), and Other (5%). Techniques they use to learn about targeet audience for purposes of creating the right messages was another interesting area. Fewer than 45% of technology marketers said they use the following techniques: Secondary Data Analysis/Internet Searches (38%), Database Analysis (36%), Qualitative Primary Research (35%), Quantitative Primary Research (31%), Auditing Existing Buyer Data (29%), Expert Advisory Boards (14%), Usability Testing (11%), and Other (1%). 2% said they do not use any techniques. In case of content marketing tactics as shown in Graph below, fewer than 60% of technology marketers said they use the following tactics: Online Presentations (54%), Illustrations/Photos (40%), Interactive Tools (40%), Research Reports (38%), Mobile Apps (17%), Separate Content Hubs (17%), Print Magazines (16%),Video [live-streaming media] (15%), Books (14%), Virtual Conferences (14%), Digital Magazines (13%), Podcasts (12%), Print Newsletters (6%), and Other (12%).

Graph 1 Technology Content Marketing Tactic Usage

Source: own elaboration according to Content Marketing Institute

When respondents were asked to indicate how often do they take the following concepts into account while creating content for theri organization, results were quite as expected. You can see them below.

Graph 2 How Often Technology Marketers Consider Various Concepts While Creating Content
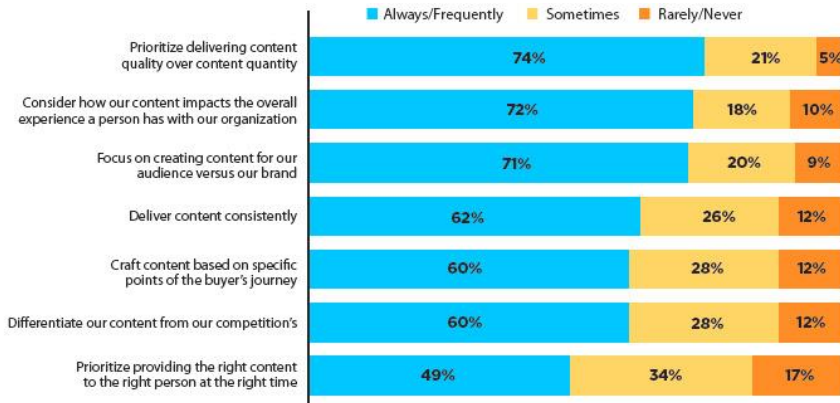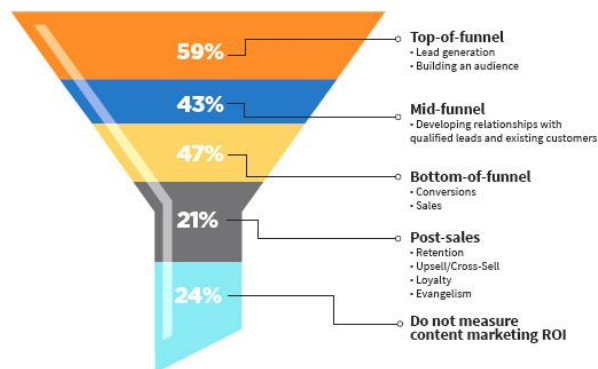

Source: own elaboration according to Content Marketing Institute

Fewer than 15% of technology marketers said they use the following channels to distribute content: Pinterest (12%), Medium (8%), Snapchat (4%), iTunes (3%), Tumblr (2%), and Other (23%). In case of matrics usage to determine ho well their content marketing is producing results, fewer than 50% of technology marketers said they use the following metrics: Subscriber/ Community Growth (42%), Inbound Links (39%), Data Capture (30%), Qualitative Feedback from Customers (28%), Customer Renewal Rates (20%), Brand Lift (19%), Purchase Intent (16%), and Other (5%). 1% said they do not use metrics.

Same area but with the condition of truly measurable results was represented as follows. Fewer than 20% of technology marketers whose organizations use the following metrics said the metric provides truly measurable results of their content marketing efforts: Subscriber/Community Growth (18%), Inbound Links (11%), Data Capture (9%), Customer Renewal Rates (7%), Qualitative Feedback from Customers (7%), Brand Lift (6%), Purchase Intent (6%), and Other (2%). 5% said none of the metrics they use provide truly measurable results. In the last case they were asked to indicate at which phases of the buyer´s journey does their organization measure content marketing ROI. Results are showed in the Graph 3.

Graph 3 Phases of Buyer's Journey Where Technology Marketers Measure Content Marketing ROI

Source: own elaboration according to Content Marketing Institute

3. Discussion

Our main goal was to represent relevant and most importatn findings of the research and bring more attention to this fast groing area. We have foucesd on content creation in the light of distribution were 74 % always/frequently prioritize delivering content quality over quantity, 72 % Always/frequently consider how their content impacts the overall experience a person has with their organization and 71 % Always/frequently focus on creating content for their audience versus their brand. Regarding area of goals and metrics, the situation was also interesting. 88 % indicated they will focus on lead generation as a content marketing goal over the next 12 months, another 80 % use website traffic to measure how well their content marketing is producing results and 79 % can demonstrate how content marketing has increased audience engagement. Last area of budgets and spending indicated that 28 % is the average proportion of total marketing budget that is spent on content marketing, 43 % plan to increase their content marketing spending over the next 12 months and 38 % .lan to keep their content marketing spending around the same level over the next 12 months.

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